

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-3641
Minority (202) 225-2927

January 9, 2023

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 C Street, Southwest
Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable John Howard, MD
Administrator, World Trade Center Health Program
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
395 E Street, Southwest
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra and Administrator Howard:

I write today to urge you to quickly finalize the proposed rule entitled *World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program; Addition of Uterine Cancer to the List of WTC-Related Health Conditions* (Docket No. CDC-2022-0052; NIOSH-347), published on May 10, 2022.¹ Many women who served as first responders or survivors of the 9/11 attacks have been waiting for over a decade for uterine cancer to be added as a covered health condition. While I was pleased that this administration finally heard their call and proposed to add uterine cancer to the list of WTC-related health conditions, it has now been eight months since the rule was proposed and these women and their families are still waiting. I urge you to finalize this rule without any further delay.

The WTC Health Program covers all major types of cancer, except uterine cancer.² As the WTC Health Program's Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) found, this discrepancy should not exist, because mechanisms for exposure to toxic chemicals that may cause cancer are similar across cancer types, and it is "highly implausible that uterine cancer would be the *only* cancer not related to WTC exposures."³ The STAC also specifically found that exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) found in WTC dust and smoke were relevant for considering whether to include uterine cancer as a covered condition.⁴ EDCs found at the WTC site included cadmium, perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), phthalates, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polychlorinated dibenzo-para-dioxins, and polychlorinated dibenzofurans (PCDD/Fs).⁵ As noted in the proposed rule, a growing body of scientific evidence has suggested that exposure to EDCs like these may be a risk factor

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, *World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program; Addition of Uterine Cancer to the List of WTC-Related Health Conditions*, 87 FR 27961 (May 10, 2022).

² *Id.*

³ Letter from Dr. Elizabeth Ward, Chair of the WTC Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), to Dr. John Howard, Administrator of WTC Health Program, *available at*

<https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/pdfs/stac/STAC.Recommendation.Received.29.November.2021.pdf> (Nov. 18, 2021)

(emphasis in original).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

for female reproductive cancers, including uterine cancers.⁶ Furthermore, given the potentially long latency between exposure to EDCs and disease, and the risks posed to those who were in utero, infants, children, adolescents, and young adults at the time of exposure, I am concerned that we may see more cases of uterine cancer among young WTC survivors as time goes on.⁷ For these reasons, it is critical that the WTC Health Program recognize uterine cancer as a covered condition in order to get those living with the disease the help to which they are entitled.

The proposed rule and the STAC report both noted that there are relatively few women included in established WTC research cohorts. I am also concerned about how this lack of data may have contributed to the delay in recognizing uterine cancer as a covered condition, and how this may cause additional delays in recognizing other diseases going forward. To that end, I request a briefing from the WTC Health Program to learn about what steps it is taking to account for a potential lack of data and how research can be improved, including among younger WTC survivors.

Survivors of the WTC attack battling uterine cancer should not be forced to wait any longer. I look forward to seeing the proposed rule quickly finalized and hearing more from the WTC Health Program about how we can ensure WTC-related conditions are recognized in a timely manner. Should you have questions about this letter and to schedule the requested briefing, please contact Stephen Holland of the Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Pallone, Jr." in a cursive style.

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member

⁶ *Supra* note 1.

⁷ *Supra* note 3.