

From: DHHS: BiomonitoringNH <BiomonitoringNH@dhhs.nh.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2024 11:21 AM
To: Shelli Fortin <safortin@berlinnh.gov>
Cc: Chatterjee, Madhumita <Madhumita.Chatterjee@dhhs.nh.gov>; Gao, Fengxiang <Fengxiang.Gao@dhhs.nh.gov>; Josefiak, Melissa <Melissa.S.Josefiak@dhhs.nh.gov>
Subject: NH DHHS BiomonitoringNH Program: request for Berlin's support

Dear Mayor Robert Cone,

I am the Administrator of the [BiomonitoringNH Program](#) within the NH Public Health Laboratories (PHL), Division of Public Health Services at the Department of Health and Human Services. Copied on this email are Dr. Madhumita Chatterjee, the PHL Chemistry Program Manager and Principal Investigator of the current BiomonitoringNH grant and Dr. Fengxiang Gao, NH PHL Director. As background, Biomonitoring is measuring environmental chemicals in the human body (tissue and fluids) such as urine and blood. One example of biomonitoring is testing children's blood for lead to reduce childhood lead exposure. Biomonitoring is a public health tool that helps to identify which chemicals are getting into people's bodies and at what levels (how much) from environmental sources such as air, water, soil, food, and even everyday products. By informing people about how they may come into contact with chemicals, we are better able to reduce chemical exposures and protect the health of NH residents.

We are reaching out to you to request your support for our application to the 2024 CDC National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) number [CDC-RFA-EH-24-0043](#). As written in the NOFO, this three-years grant aims at "assessing disproportionate exposure to environmental chemicals among communities." For this application, we will be proposing two projects with specific focus on "communities unequally affected by exposure to possibly harmful chemicals." One project would focus solely on the population of Berlin, NH. **Your written letter of support (preferably by April 8, 2024) will help us put forward a competitive application to fund this important work:**

Project #1) Targeted investigation: As you are aware, Berlin has numerous high [SVI scores](#), environmental burden ([Environmental Justice Index Explorer](#)), an EPA Superfund site, mercury contamination of the Androscoggin River, older housing stock (risk of lead exposure), and a biomass facility. We believe citizens in this area are at increased risk for chemical exposure, which can be evaluated using biomonitoring. This investigation would include analyzing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs, found in air pollution), volatile organic compounds (VOCs, found in industrial pollution and things like paint and gasoline), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances ([PFAS](#), commonly used in industrial work), metals, and cotinine (a breakdown product of nicotine). It may also include environmental testing, should the opportunity arise. Results from this testing would be compared to NH state levels and to national levels to better understand the differences in chemical exposures of Berlin residents. The target sample size is approximately 400 people, randomly recruited from the non-institutionalized population. The project also includes a comprehensive marketing campaign to inform Berlin residents and get buy-in prior to the launch of the investigation. BiomonitoringNH would work closely with your office, other town officials, and local leaders to ensure questions and concerns are continuously addressed.

Project #2) PFAS-focused surveillance investigation: New Hampshire has the highest number of PFAS contamination sites in the U.S., with 469 identified ([PubMed](#)). Additionally, there are 20 current and one proposed EPA Superfund sites in NH ([EPA](#)) and when considering NH's small population, this is about

14.5 sites per million people. Upon comparing to the rest of the U.S., NH ranks fourth highest by this measure. Numerous studies indicate that Superfund sites are often located in areas with vulnerable populations (such as lower income or minority groups) who are disproportionately impacted by chemical exposure from these sites. For these reasons, BiomonitoringNH plans to conduct a surveillance investigation across NH that oversamples people living near Superfund or PFAS contamination sites to identify their chemical exposures to see if their levels differ from NH and national averages. The investigation will include analyzing PAHs, VOCs, PFAS, metals, pesticides, and cotinine. It may also include environmental testing, should the opportunity arise.

We look forward to your support of this important work for the benefit of Berlin residents (**with letter of support greatly appreciated by April 8, 2024**). Please let us know if you have questions or if you need any additional information about how we can partner on either of these projects for this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Melissa Josefiak, MPH
BiomonitoringNH Program Administrator

Madhumita Chatterjee, PhD
NH PHL Chemistry Program Manager &
BiomonitoringNH Principal Investigator