118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. _____

Expressing concern about the elevated levels of lead in one-third of the world's children and the global causes of lead exposure, and calling for the inclusion of lead exposure prevention in global health, education, and environment programs abroad.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Expressing concern about the elevated levels of lead in one-third of the world's children and the global causes of lead exposure, and calling for the inclusion of lead exposure prevention in global health, education, and environment programs abroad.

Whereas the heavy metal lead is a common element found in the Earth's crust and is a known toxin;

Whereas children are particularly vulnerable to lead exposure due to lead's harmful effects on the brain and nervous system development;

Whereas, according to the World Health Organization, people can be exposed to lead through the inhalation of lead par-

ticles produced from the burning of leaded materials, including during recycling and smelting;

Whereas exposure to lead also occurs through the ingestion of dust, paint flakes, water, and food contaminated with lead;

Whereas, over time, significant exposure to lead and the accumulation of lead in the body can result in lead poisoning, a severe, life-threatening condition that requires medical attention;

Whereas, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), approximately 1 in 3 children, up to approximately 800,000,000 globally, have blood lead levels at or above the threshold for intervention in a child's environment recommended by the World Health Organization;

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children from low-income families are particularly vulnerable to lead exposure;

Whereas the World Health Organization has determined that there is no level of exposure to lead that is known to be without harmful effects;

Whereas lead exposure is linked to toxicity in every organ system, with young children being especially susceptible;

Whereas, compared to adults, children absorb 4 to 5 times more ingested lead;

Whereas high levels of lead among children can cause comas, convulsions, and even death through attacks on the central nervous system and the brain;

Whereas lead exposure can cause serious and irreversible neurological damage and is linked, among children, to negative effects on brain development, lower intelligence

quotient (IQ) levels, increased antisocial behavior, as well as decreased cognitive function and abilities to learn;

Whereas undernourished children, who lack calcium and iron, are more vulnerable to absorbing lead;

Whereas the World Health Organization links exposure to high amounts of lead among pregnant women to stillbirth, miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight;

Whereas lead stored in a woman's body is released into her blood during pregnancy and becomes a source of exposure to the developing fetus;

Whereas poorly regulated or informal recycling of used lead-acid batteries, particularly in developing countries, heightens the risk of occupational exposure to lead, including among children, and environmental contamination;

Whereas that contamination is connected to the food system through the consumption of shellfish and fish living in contaminated water, animals foraging in contaminated spaces, and the cultivation of crops in contaminated fields;

Whereas household and consumer goods in low- and middle-income countries that are contaminated with lead, such as cookware, spices, toys, paint, and cosmetics, can poison children in those countries and can enter the global supply chain and poison children in the United States;

Whereas, in 2023, World Bank researchers conducted a comprehensive examination of country-by-country data on blood lead levels among children 5 years old and younger and determined an estimated loss of 765,000,000 intelligence quotient points occurred among the total children captured by the data;

Whereas, in that same study, World Bank researchers determined that in 2019, 5,500,000 adults died from cardiovascular disease associated with lead exposure and the global cost of lead exposure was approximately $6,000,000,000,000;

Whereas lead poisoning may account for up to 20 percent of the learning gap between children in high-income countries and children in low-income countries;

Whereas there are cost-effective approaches to prevent lead exposure, with significant return on investment in the form of improved health, increased productivity, higher IQs, and higher lifetime earnings;

Whereas, in 2023, the G7 recognized the impact of lead exposure on vulnerable communities and affirmed its commitment to reducing lead in the environment and addressing the disproportionate effects of lead exposure on vulnerable populations;

Whereas, each year, the United States recognizes National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in October to increase lead poisoning prevention awareness and reduce childhood exposure to lead;

Whereas, each year, the United Nations recognizes International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in October to remind governments, civil society organizations, health partners, industry, and other stakeholders of the unacceptable risks of lead exposure and the need for action to protect human health and the environment in support of meeting Sustainable Development Goal targets;

Whereas, despite the enormous health and economic impacts of lead exposure in low- and middle-income countries and the potential of cost-effective interventions, there is rel-

atively little global assistance to help those countries prevent lead exposure;

Whereas the United States Agency for International Development is leading an initiative calling for increased actions and resources to prevent lead poisoning and to address the risk of lead exposure, starting with exposure from consumer goods in low- and middle-income countries; and

Whereas the United States can play a leadership role globally to help prevent children from the harms of lead exposure: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the dangerous impact of lead exposure on children, domestically and globally;

(2) acknowledges the broader impact of lead exposure on the global economy;

(3) asserts that addressing the global lead poisoning health crisis is in the security and economic interests of the United States;

(4) recognizes that preventing lead from entering the environment is the most effective strategy for combating lead exposure in children; and

(5) calls upon the United States Agency for International Development, in consultation with the International Lead Exposure Working Group of the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, as well as other relevant agencies that support international develop-

ment programs, to include lead exposure prevention, especially for children, in their approaches and programs as appropriate.