DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational
Safety and Health
1090 Tusculum Avenue
Cincinnati OH 45226-1998

October 4, 2024

Dr. Kelly Kimple
Acting Director
Division of Public Health
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Raleigh, North Carolina

Dear Dr. Kimple:

In February 2024, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) received a request for a health hazard evaluation from North Carolina State University (NCSU). The NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation Program focuses on helping employees, unions, and employers learn whether health hazards are present at their workplace and recommending ways to reduce hazards and prevent work-related illness. The request was to evaluate concerns about exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and the occurrence of cancer among persons who worked in Poe Hall. A team of NIOSH scientists with expertise in industrial hygiene, ventilation engineering, occupational medicine, and epidemiology is working on this evaluation. I am writing to request assistance from the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) with part of this evaluation as described below.

When evaluating concerns about whether an exposure in the workplace may be associated with cancer among employees, NIOSH scientists follow principles from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Guidelines for Examining Unusual Patterns of Cancer and Environmental Concerns (https://www.cdc.gov/cancer-environment/php/guidelines/index.html). NIOSH scientists adapt methods presented in the Guidelines to apply to the workplace setting. NIOSH evaluations consider multiple questions to evaluate whether an unusual pattern of cancer exists and if evidence suggests that cancer among employees is likely to be associated with a workplace exposure. Those questions include:

- Was exposure to a specific chemical substance or physical agent at levels known or suspected of causing cancer occurring at the workplace?
- Have employees experienced more of a specific type or related types of cancer than expected?
- Have employees experienced an unusual distribution of a specific type or related types of cancer?
- Has enough time passed since a potential exposure began for excess cancer rates or an unusual pattern of cancer to be observed among employees?

Data shared publicly by NCSU (https://www.ncsu.edu/poe-hall-updates/) indicates that there was potential for exposure to PCBs among people working in Poe Hall. However, the level and duration of exposure remains unclear. The scientific literature indicates that PCB exposure is associated with an increased risk of specific types of cancer. Therefore, as we continue to

evaluate the potential for exposure to PCBs at Poe Hall, we are taking action to understand and describe the occurrence of cancer among NCSU employees who worked in the building.

We worked with NCSU representatives to construct a list of employees who worked in Poe Hall prior to its closure in November 2023. Among this group, we plan to evaluate the occurrence of specific cancer types associated with PCB exposure in the scientific literature. Focusing on these specific cancer types is helpful in this phase of the evaluation as they are the cancer types we would expect to see an elevation in, or unusual pattern of, as a result of PCB exposure.

I am requesting assistance from NC DPH to:

1) match the list of employees to cancer diagnoses reported to the North Carolina Central Cancer Registry (NC CCR); and,
2) analyze the data to provide us with aggregate results we can use to describe the occurrence of specific cancer types among employees who worked in Poe Hall compared to the North Carolina general population.

Including data from the NC CCR in this evaluation will provide valuable information to help us determine if evidence suggests an excess or an unusual distribution of specific cancer types has occurred among NCSU employees who worked in Poe Hall. This information will help us more completely answer the evaluation questions outlined above and make recommendations.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to further discussions with your team.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by Jessica L. Rinsky -S
Date: 2024.10.04 09:46:17 -04'00'

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