

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush,

On August 23, 2002, many of us in the New York delegation wrote to you asking for your support for a \$90 million federal appropriation to help fund a program through the Mt. Sinai Center for Occupational & Environmental Medicine that would monitor the health of workers from ground zero, leading to coordinated diagnoses and treatment plans. Since then, two recent medical reports have been published that underscore the urgency of our concerns and deserve your immediate attention.

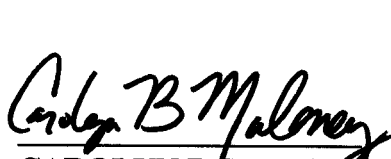
On September 12, 2002, *The New England Journal of Medicine* released a comprehensive report on the health of firefighters who worked at ground zero (<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/347/11/806>). This report examined medical records of 10,116 of the 10,993 firefighters who worked in recovery efforts in days following September 11<sup>th</sup>. It found that air pollutants created by the World Trade Center terrorist attack left hundreds of firefighters with debilitating coughs and scores of others with bronchial afflictions. Only 48% of these recovered enough to return to work within seven months, a rate far worse than the 90% recovery rate for firefighters who have experienced smoke inhalation in other emergencies.


The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health reported findings on September 11, 2002, of abnormally high levels of physical and mental illnesses in workers who were within two blocks of the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr>). Close to two-thirds of these workers reported eye, nose or throat irritation, the study found, compared with about a third from a control group of workers more than five miles away from ground zero. Twenty-three percent of workers within two blocks of the attack showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, compared with 6% in the control group. These reports make it clearer than ever that toxins from the destruction at ground zero seriously harmed hundreds, if not thousands of workers and volunteers during recovery efforts, but we still do not have a coordinated system in place to monitor the health and medical needs of these courageous people.

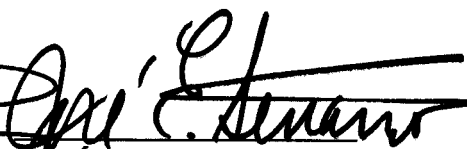
Mr. President, we are sure you agree that protecting the health of workers who responded to the terrorist attacks must be one of our top priorities. As you know, the \$90 million in federal funds was already included in a Congressional conference report for the FY02 emergency supplemental appropriation and has the full support of the entire New York delegation. The least we can do for the workers and volunteers who put their lives on the line to help others is to assure the appropriate monitoring and treatment of their medical needs. We once again urge your support for the allocation of federal funds that can help these workers through comprehensive

monitoring and coordinated treatment, and we repeat our request for a meeting with you to move forward as quickly as possible with the development of this program.

Sincerely,

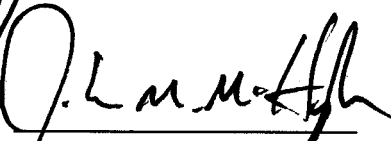
  
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Member of Congress


  
JOSEPH CROWLEY  
Member of Congress


  
JOSÉ SERRANO  
Member of Congress


  
NITA LOWEY  
Member of Congress

  
CHARLES RANGEL  
Member of Congress

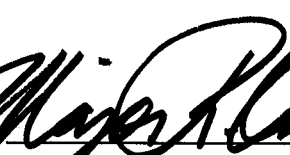
  
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EDOLPHUS TOWNS  
Member of Congress

cc:  
The Honorable Joe Allbaugh, Director of FEMA  
The Honorable Mitch Daniels, Director of OMB