

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 20, 2021

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

Given the recent 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we call on you and your administration to open the City's files on the aftermath of the attacks to help provide injured and ill 9/11 responders, survivors, and their families a better understanding of what the City knew at the time about the likely scope of the health crisis and when they knew it.

The time has come for a full accounting of the history of 9/11. President Biden's ongoing review and declassification of documents related to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's possible involvement in the 9/11 attacks were a critical first step in this accounting. Providing full transparency on what the government knew about the health risks at Ground Zero and how they potentially covered up that information will finally provide transparency to a too-often overlooked aspect of the attack's history.

Throughout our two decades of work with the 9/11 community to guarantee their health care and compensation, we have faced resistance from many in the federal government – namely to admitting that the toxins released in the attacks and during cleanup posed a serious and ongoing health hazard to those on the pile and in the vicinity. Those health risks, about which we immediately warned the government, have now caused enormous harm to thousands of responders and survivors. Many of them are now living with – and too many are dying from – 9/11 related health conditions caused by exposure to those toxins 20 years ago.

In 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a report on how they responded to 9/11.¹ This report outlined what the federal government knew about the extent of the problem and the clear health threat, after the EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman had repeatedly said that the “air was safe to breathe.” However, we have yet to see a full accounting of what then-Mayor Giuliani and his administration knew at the time.

While previous reports have hinted at what the Giuliani administration knew about the health risks,² it is time for a complete accounting of this history. If it is true that they knew that thousands of responders and community members would face tremendous long-term health impacts, the administration unnecessarily delayed the effort to provide health care to the thousands of responders and survivors exposed in the aftermath on the pile and in schools, offices, and homes around the area.

¹ Office of Inspector General, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Report #2003-P-00012, *Report: EPA's Response to the World Trade Center Collapse: Challenges, Successes, and Areas for Improvement* (Aug. 21, 2003), <https://www.epa.gov/office-inspector-general/report-epas-response-world-trade-center-collapse-challenges-successes-and>.

² Anthony DePalma, *Ground Zero Illnesses Clouding Giuliani's Legacy*, N.Y. Times (May 14, 2007), <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/14/nyregion/14giuliani.html>.


It is imperative that we learn from the mistakes made in the aftermath of the attacks and ensure that in any future disasters, we are better prepared to identify and deal with potential long-term health risks.

We urge you to have the City of New York review its files and, in the interest of transparency, fully release any information it has on the what the City knew about the hazards faced by 9/11 responders and survivors who lived, worked, and went to school in the covered disaster zone.

More specifically, we ask that the City release any documents related to 9/11 that are in its files or emails from the period of September 11, 2001 through the spring of 2002. While some documents may have been disclosed in past litigation, we do not believe this represents the entirety of the City's files and demand a complete release.

Two decades later, a full review remains pressing. Elected officials who made life and death decisions, and who failed to disclose vital information owe accountability to the public. Finally, it is critical that lessons be learned to protect responders and the public in any future disaster.

Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney



Jerrold Nadler