Dear Friend of Michigan State University:

I'm sure by now you're aware of the alarming lead contamination of Flint's drinking water supply. I'm writing to assure you that, just as Michigan State has supported the people of Flint long before this tragedy unfolded, we will stand with that community in real and substantial ways long after the world's attention has moved on.

The nation's pioneer land-grant university, MSU's method has always been one of partnership—of co-creating solutions with people in their own communities. You should read College of Human Medicine interim dean Aron Sousa's Newsweek essay on the pivotal role of research-intensive, land-grant universities in this matter. You also can get a small glimpse of MSU's current involvement in Flint at this web page, but let me give you a brief summary.

Much of MSU's engagement in Flint has come through our century-old Extension program; since the 1950s through our College of Education's work in the Flint Community Schools with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; and through the College of Human Medicine (CHM), which formed partnerships with Flint hospitals to train doctors starting in 1969.

Today we enroll more than a thousand undergraduate and graduate students from Genesee County and remain an engaged partner with the Mott Foundation, community hospitals, and other stakeholders. With Mott support, we expanded our public health program there in 2014 and opened a physical campus downtown.

It is our association with Hurley Medical Center, through CHM assistant professor Mona Hanna-Attisha, that most directly connects MSU with Flint's public health crisis. Dr. Hanna-Attisha grew to love the Flint community while an MSU medical student there and today leads Hurley's Pediatric Residency Program, training physicians in partnership with CHM. She is widely credited with bringing the human scope of the water contamination to light and, with MSU and Hurley colleagues, recently published results of their study.

Dr. Hanna-Attisha now leads the MSU/Hurley Pediatric Public Health Initiative, bringing together experts in pediatrics, child development, psychology, epidemiology, nutrition, toxicology, geography, and education, with MSU Extension and other partners. The intent is to address Flint's widespread lead exposure from multiple fronts and to provide the tools and resources for the assessment, continued research, and monitoring interventions necessary for improving children's health and development. Expansion of our public health program to Flint laid the groundwork for this initiative's timely launch. You can provide direct support for this vital effort by giving to the MSU Pediatric Public Health Fund.

Dr. Hanna-Attisha lives out her commitment to land-grant values in her passion for making a difference every day in the lives of children and families in Flint. As we observe Founders' Day February 9, her example inspires us to reflect on how the society that created MSU needs and deserves our very best. Our best research, our best education, and our best service. This is our charge and our promise.

For Flint. For the world. Spartans Will.

Lou Anna K. Simon, PhD
President, Michigan State University