



**Testimony in Opposition to Representative Merrin's Amendment to the Budget Bill
that Would Increase Lead Poisoning in Children
The Ohio Senate
Finance – Health and Medicaid Subcommittee
May 24, 2017 | Columbus, Ohio**

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares and Members of the Committee thank you for this opportunity to speak.

My name is Larry Sykes and I am a member of Toledo City Council. I personally worked very hard to pass Toledo's lead law, because I've seen the horrible things lead does to our kids and our society.

I have a unique perspective because of my various positions in the community. In addition to City Council, I currently serve on the Lucas County Children Services Board and I am a former board member of the St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center Board, the Lucas County Metropolitan Housing Authority and Toledo Public Schools.

Lead is ruining our children's lives and robbing them of their futures. Child lead exposure lowers IQs, causes developmental problems and is linked to violent crime. You all struggle with finding money to pay for education, public safety and public health. Well, having less children being exposed to lead will lessen the need in all three of those areas. And we know that the approach that Toledo has adopted works. The City of Rochester had over an 80% decrease in child lead poisonings when they adopted a preventative approach.

I want you to know that Toledo City Council very carefully crafted this law. We have been working on this issue for four years. There have been many council committee meetings where we took testimony from landlords, families, medical professionals and activists. All voices were given the opportunity to be heard. We consulted heavily with the City of Rochester to learn from their process and adopted a policy that we feel will best work in our community.

But when Representative Merrin wrote his budget amendment, he didn't talk to any of Toledo's elected officials who have been living lead for the past four years. I cannot tell you how frustrating it is to have a legislator who clearly has no personal experience with lead-poisoned children trying to stop us from saving them.

Toledo's major medical institutions are all in agreement that our approach should be followed. The Merrin amendment should be struck from the budget bill and I am very grateful for the leadership from Senator Brown and Senator Lehner who have drafted amendments to do just that.

We don't live in a third-world country, but you might not realize that if you looked at some of the housing conditions in some of Toledo's neighborhoods. If a landlord is renting a property, he should have to make sure that it's safe for children. This is not too much to ask. We require our water to be lead-safe, why shouldn't we require that our housing stock be safe too?

Lead paint was banned in 1978, yet here we are today still talking about the problem. It's past time to do something about it.

I am here to plead with you today to let us work to save our children. Toledo's attempt to stop lead poisoning will help other policy makers figure out what works and what does not. Our children's futures are at stake

Thank you.