



Ohio Healthy Homes Network

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chairman Oelslager

Vice Chair Manning

June 6, 2017

Patricia Barnes

Executive Director, Ohio Healthy Homes Network

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Patricia Barnes, Executive Director of the Ohio Healthy Homes Network (OHHN). OHHN's mission is to promote healthy, safe and affordable housing for people of all ages.

OHHN is testifying in opposition to the amendment to HB 49 that preempts local Lead paint laws.

Most Housing in Ohio Has Lead Paint

I'd like to share with you a few reasons why we should be concerned about lead in our state:

- "...Deteriorating Lead-based paint is identified as the most probable cause of elevated blood Lead levels in people in the vast majority of ODH's environmental assessments." (Ohio Department of Health)
- "...Exposure to even low levels of Lead can cause damage over time, especially in children. The greatest risk is to brain development, where **irreversible** damage can occur" (The Mayo Clinic)
- 3.5 million Ohio housing units (67%) were built before 1979 and are presumed to contain Lead-based paint (US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2015 American Community Survey 1-year estimates)
- Under Ohio's Lead law (ORC Chapter 3742 {Lead Abatement}), owners must abate Lead hazards, within a specific time frame, after a public health investigation shows a child was exposed to Lead-based hazards on the property. Mitigation is triggered only after a child has an elevated blood Lead level.

P.O. Box 2562
Columbus, Ohio 43216

480 W. Town Street
Columbus, OH 43215

614-289-8812

www.ohhn.org

- Ohio had 4,389 confirmed cases of childhood Lead poisoning in 2015 ([ODH website, 2015 statistics](#)).
- In 2016, Case Western Reserve University published a study of 13,000 entering kindergarteners in 2007-2010 in Cleveland. Researchers found that "...Children who spent more time living and near properties that had signs of deterioration and disinvestment were more likely to have elevated blood lead levels and lower scores on a kindergarten readiness assessment...." (see [Housing Deterioration Contributes to Elevated Blood Lead Levels and Lower Kindergarten Readiness Scores in Cleveland](#))

Local Laws Prevent Harmful Exposure to Lead

- Two of Ohio's hardest hit areas - Cleveland, with 1,574 children having confirmed elevated blood Lead levels (12.21% of those tested), and Toledo with 282 children having confirmed elevated blood Lead levels (5.52% of those tested) - have taken pro-active approaches to the problem.
- Toledo's Lead ordinance covers 1 to 4 unit rentals; these smaller properties were selected because data showed most children were being lead poisoned in small rentals. The ordinance requires visual inspection and dust wipe sampling. Owners are expected to maintain the property in a lead safe condition. They are not required to conduct abatement.
- Starting in July, Cleveland will begin a 5-year plan of enhanced, voluntary, rental housing code inspections to look for safety hazards including peeling paint. Cleveland will encourage landlords to maintain their properties in a lead-safe condition; abatement won't be required.
- The amendment to preempt all local Lead laws would stop Toledo, Cleveland, and other Ohio cities from pro-actively preventing lead poisoning. We urge you to remove the amendment.

Lead Study Group

- OHHN supports creating a temporary Lead Study Group to recommend improvements to Chapter 3742. The Lead Study Group will provide the opportunity to address issues such as the role of local vs. state lead laws in a thoughtful manner over a period up to 18 months.
- Given the urgent need to protect children from lead-based paint hazards, we ask you to allow local Lead laws to proceed. We should learn from these efforts as we work to create a new approach to protecting children from lead that incorporates the strengths of state and local government.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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