

Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition

#LeadFreeKidsOH

**Testimony to the Health and Medicaid Subcommittee on HB 166
May 14, 2019**

Thank you Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman and Ranking Member Thomas and Senate Finance Committee on Health and Medicaid Members

My name is Patricia Barnes and I offer this testimony to you today as co-chair of the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition, Executive Director of the Ohio Healthy Homes Network, and an interested party on issues related to lead, lead poisoned children and the prevention of child lead poisoning. Together with the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University, we co-chair the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition which seeks to secure the public commitment and investment needed to ensure all Ohio children are safe from lead in their homes and communities.

Lead paint and dust in pre-1978 housing remains the single most toxic source of lead for children. Thousands of Ohio children under 6 have been poisoned by lead and continue to be exposed to lead hazards. Over a 10-year period (2007-2016), the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reported 23,252 children with elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs), which is a conservative number.¹

The key to preventing lead poisoning in children is the identification and elimination of major sources of lead exposure, as noted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics: **“primary prevention is now widely recognized as the optimal strategy.”**² Primary prevention requires targeting the source – homes built prior to when lead paint was banned in 1978 – and ensuring those homes are lead-safe.

Ohio has already begun to move in this direction with development of the ODH’s and Ohio Department of Medicaid’s (ODM) lead hazard abatement program

¹ In 2016, of the 162,185 children who tested for lead, 4,591 (2.83%) had confirmed EBLLs. In 2015, following a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control

² Council on Environmental Health, Prevention of Childhood Lead Toxicity. Pediatrics (July 2016), Vol. 138. Issue 1 at <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/1/e20161493> See also CDC Response to Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention.

using SCHIP funding. HB 166 preserves this program and strives to increase its impact by removing some administrative barriers. Additional initiatives in HB 166 supported by the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition include:

- \$450,000 in HB 166 to help build a workforce of lead specialists with training of lead abatement contractors and reimbursement of license fees.
- Increased funding for Early Intervention in the Department of Developmental Disabilities to provide much needed support for children already harmed by lead.
- A lead abatement tax credit to assist homeowners with the cost of lead abatement.

We are eager to work in partnership with Governor DeWine and the Legislature to ensure lead safety for all Ohio children.

Request for Amendment to Move the US EPA Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule to Ohio

We further urge you to protect children from lead hazards during renovation and construction by transferring administration of the USEPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule (RRP) to the Ohio Department of Health.³ The RRP rule was created to protect children from lead hazards that can be created when lead-based paint is disturbed during renovation in pre-1978 structures..

The RRP Rule requires those who work on renovation, repair and painting projects in residences and child caring facilities built prior to 1978 to be trained and certified in lead-safe RRP work practices. Residential rental property owners/managers, general contractors, firms and special trade contractors, such as painters, plumbers, carpenters and electricians are covered under RRP.

Moving management of the RRP to Ohio would ensure the Rule would be effectively administered in Ohio without any additional regulations or fees. Indeed, ODH would not only benefit by better protecting our children but by making fees more reasonable and equitable for contractors and by keeping all Ohio dollars in Ohio to support this work.

Currently, US EA has only two FTEs to cover Ohio and the other six states in

³ USEPA Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Program
<https://www.epa.gov/lead/lead-renovation-repair-and-painting-program>

Region V. The USEPA authorizes states to administer and enforce the RRP Rule through state lead licensure programs. Fourteen (14) states have been authorized to administer and enforce RRP. ODH is well positioned to manage the RRP program through its lead licensure program.⁴

The Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition requests an amendment to HB 166 that would designate the ODH Lead Licensure and Accreditation Program as the program administrator. This would allow three FTEs at ODH to connect contractors with RRP training in their communities, provide information about certification, process applications for certification, oversee RRP training programs, investigate complaints and provide public education on lead safe work practices.

An appropriation of only \$400,000 would be needed in the first year to ramp up the program. Income would be self-generating thereafter. Moving administration of the RRP to Ohio is both a low-cost and effective way Ohio can protect young children from lead hazards.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership in preventing child lead poisoning.

⁴ The 14 states with RRP programs are Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin

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