

Public Testimony on H.B. 110
House Finance Committee
By Fred Strahorn, Exec. Director OHHN

I want to thank Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plumber, Ranking member Crawley and members of the House Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 110, the state budget bill. I am here on behalf of the Ohio Healthy Homes Network (OHHN) which is engaged in advocacy to promote healthy, safe and affordable housing.

The Ohio Healthy Homes Network (OHHN) is a network of grassroots and non-profit organization that engage in work to promote healthy, safe and affordable housing throughout the state of Ohio. OHHN does advocacy around policy impacting the overall health of Ohio families, from indoor air quality issues to lead-safety.

Today, I am here to testify in support of the funding in the budget to address issues of lead poisoning in the state of Ohio.

Lead-based paint and its dust are the most common source of lead poisoning. Lead was commonly added to interior and exterior paint in the United States and Europe for centuries. In 1978, the United States government banned the use of lead paint in residential settings. Though lead paint is not used today, it is still found in many homes built prior to 1978

Lead is a naturally occurring element that can be found in water, air, soil and consumer products. Lead is hazardous to humans. Exposure to lead can result in poisoning when it accumulates in a person's bones and soft tissue. Lead poisoning can cause numerous health challenges, including abdominal pain, vision and hearing loss, seizures, cognitive and developmental delays, behavior changes and even death.

Much of Ohio's housing stock was constructed before lead-based paint was prohibited. In fact, more than two-thirds of homes in Ohio were built before 1980, and more than one-fourth were constructed before 1950. In Ohio's urban communities, there is an even greater concentration of older homes. Fifty-eight percent of homes in Ohio's urban cores were built before 1950.

While lead poisoning can affect individuals of all ages, children are at the greatest risk. Children's bodies absorb lead more efficiently than adults and they are less able than adults to detoxify their bodies of lead. As children crawl, they can collect lead dust on their hands which is then ingested when they touch their hands to their mouth. Infants and toddlers are also developmentally programmed for mouthing behavior. They learn new sensations, objects and experiences through hand-to-mouth and object-to-mouth behaviors. Children in this age group may consume lead paint that is peeling or chipping.

As we know, the majority of brain development occurs within the first 5 or 6 years of a child's life. If developmental damage occurs to the brain in that period that damage is permanent. This issue impacts efforts that the state is making in other areas such as developmental disability, education and poverty.

OHHN supports the funding for the Lead Abatement Fund [ODH 440527] and for the Lead Safe Home Fund [ODH 440530]. We also support funding for H2Ohio [OEPA 715695] which contains money for replacing Lead Service Line (waterlines) and Early Intervention [ODD 322421] funding for lead poisoned children.

OHHN would like to see an expansion of the SCHIP Lead Program funding for high-risk children from \$5 million dollars to \$10 million dollars per FY.

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plumber, Ranking member Crawley and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Health subcommittee and I would be happy to entertain any questions.