



**Substitute House Bill 33 Testimony to the Ohio Senate
Finance Committee
Gabriella Celeste, Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition
May 25, 2023 – Written Submission**

Academy of Medicine of Cleveland and Northern Ohio
Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.
Advocates for Ohio's Future
Alliance for the Great Lakes
American Academy of Pediatrics, Ohio Chapter
Ashland/Richland County Lead Prevention Collaborative
Black Child Development Institute – Ohio
Bright Beginnings
Canton City Public Health
Center for Community Solutions
Children's Defense Fund - Ohio
Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Cleveland Dream Builders LLC
Cleveland Department of Public Health
Cleveland Lead Safe Network
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio
Collective Citizens Organized Against Lead
Columbus Public Health
Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
Enterprise Community Partners
Environmental Health Watch
Fair Housing Center
Family Connections
First Year Cleveland
Franklin County Public Health
Freshwater Future
Greater Cincinnati Water Works
Groundwork Ohio
The Khnemu Foundation
Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition
The MetroHealth System
National Council of Negro Women, Inc. – Cuyahoga County Section
Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition
Northern Ohioans for Budget & Legislation Equality
Ohio's Children's Alliance
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Federation for Health Equity & Justice
Ohio Head Start Association, Inc.
Ohio Healthy Homes Network (OHHN)
Ohio Nurses Association
Ohio Poverty Law Center
Ohio Public Health Association
People Working Cooperatively
Policy Matters Ohio
PRE4CLE
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
Schubert Center for Child Studies, Case Western Reserve University
Toledo Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition
United Way of Greater Cleveland
University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's
Voices for Ohio's Children
West Ohio Community Action Partnership

Thank you Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and Senate Finance Committee members.

My name is Gabriella Celeste and I offer this testimony as the co-founder and co-chair of the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition (“OLFKC”), Policy Director of the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University, and an Interested Party on HB 33 concerning issues related to child lead poisoning prevention and child wellness. As co-chair of the leadership team with the Ohio Healthy Homes Network and the Ohio Poverty Law Center, the OLFKC represents a collection of organizations and individuals who share a deep and urgent concern about the potentially life-long harm caused by lead poisoning. The OLFKC strives to secure a public commitment and investment in primary prevention to ensure all Ohio children are safe from lead in their homes and communities.

While we are encouraged by some of the investments and protections in lead poisoning prevention preserved in the House-passed version of the FY24-25 budget (HB 33), **we urge your support of an amendment (SC1029) to restore the lead abatement GRF ALI (440527), which was flat-funded at \$6.5M per fiscal year, to the full amount included in the As-Introduced budget; specifically, restoring it to \$10,818,500 for FY24 and \$11,652,607 for FY25.** Please consider the following.

Ohio's Children & Taxpayers Bear the Costs of Lead Exposure

Ohio ranks **2nd in the U.S.**ⁱ in the number of children with elevated blood lead levels (“EBLL”) – twice the national average!ⁱⁱ

Lead is a toxin. There is no safe level of lead in the blood. Child lead poisoning can cause lifelong, irreversible brain and nervous system damage which can lead to learning and behavioral challenges, lower IQ, lower academic achievement, increased hyperactivity, emotional problems and future delinquent behavior.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Altarum Institute, a health care research organization, [released an online cost tool in 2019](#) that found Ohio would save an estimated **\$2.8 billion each year** by preventing child lead poisoning with investments in lead abatement and other measures.

Children are Exposed to Lead in Every Part of the State

[Every county in the state](#) has children who have been exposed to lead and who test positive with confirmed EBLLs. The top 5 Ohio counties with the highest rates of children with EBLLs were Crawford, Harrison, Cuyahoga, Morgan and Clark counties (2019).

Thousands of Ohio children under 6 have been poisoned by lead and continue to be exposed to lead hazards. In just one year, *2,900 Ohio children had confirmed EBLLs*. And this number is an undercount given only about 50%-60% of high-risk children are even tested for lead. Moreover, this most recent lead testing data came from 2020, when there was a significant drop in lead testing due to the pandemic.

Ohio's Old Housing is the Most Common Source of Child Lead Poisoning

80% of Ohio's EBLL cases were children exposed to lead in old housing.^{iv} Lead in residential paint was not outlawed in the U.S. until 1978. Today, lead paint dust and paint chips in pre-1978 housing remains the single most toxic source of lead for children.

- Nearly 2/3 of Ohio's housing stock built before 1980, meaning 3.5 million homes are estimated to contain potential lead hazards, with children under 6 years old living in over 400,000 of these units.^v
- Many rural areas have older housing with potential lead hazards. In fact, Henry, Darke, and Van Wert are the top 3 counties in terms of the percentage of children under 6 living in housing built before 1980.

Despite Impressive Progress, the Urgent Problem of Child Lead Poisoning Persists in Ohio

We commend the Governor and his [Lead Advisory Committee](#) for making child lead prevention a priority, as well as the Ohio General Assembly for supporting critical investments in primary prevention – that is, addressing the source of lead exposure rather than using children as lead detectors. This includes important progress like:

- creating a brand-new Ohio Lead Safe Home Fund which allowed seven grantees across the state to receive \$6.8M in total funding to build on existing lead poisoning prevention efforts or create new ones. The first round of grantees were in Allen, Clark, Erie, Franklin, Lucas, and Marion counties and included a variety of lead prevention activities (more details [here](#));
- removing lead in homes with children in 73 counties through the SCHIP lead hazard control program; and,
- fostering local innovation with Cleveland's lead safe home fund and Toledo's Historic South project. Still, with every region of Ohio being harmed by lead, we clearly have more work to do.

Restoring the lead abatement line in the HB 33 budget bill with the additional \$8.5 million over the biennium helps to ensure we maintain the momentum in protecting children from lead. Specifically, this funding will:

- Incentivize local solutions to preventing lead poisoning in their own communities through the expansion of Ohio's Lead Safe Home Fund grants to local public and private partners;
- Ensure lead safe work practices during older home renovation, repairs, and painting (RRP) to protect children and lead workers from accidental lead exposure; and,
- Provide vital education and supports to families of children with lead exposure, consistent with the lowering of the EBLL from 5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) to to 3.5 µg/dL.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please contact me at mgc36@case.edu or 216-368-5314 with any questions.

ⁱ Zuckerman, J. Ohio kids' show elevated blood levels at more than twice the national rate, study finds. Ohio Capital Journal (9/28/21) Date accessed 5/1/23: https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2021/09/28/ohio-kids-show-elevated-lead-blood-levels-at-more-than-twice-the-national-rate-study-finds/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=eb71d695-fc23-4ab9-b936-49201fe0d321&link_id=11&can_id=bef90bcb899b52a5c0f2abb24de237bb&source=email-daily-news-clips-77&email_referrer=email_1305206&email_subject=daily-news-clips

ⁱⁱ Hauptman, M., Niles, J., Gudin, J. et al. Individual and Community-level Factors Associated with Detectable and Elevated Blood Levels in US Children. JAMA Pediatrics (9/27/21). Date accessed 5/1/23: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2784260>

ⁱⁱⁱ Coulton, C., Garcia-Cobia, F. et al. Downstream Consequences of Childhood Lead Poisoning: A Longitudinal Study. (6/2020). Date accessed 5/1/23: <https://case.edu/socialwork/about/news/study-downstream-effects-childhood-lead-poisoning-reveals-racial-economic-disparities-adulthood>

^{iv} American Academy of Pediatrics, Ohio Chapter. Lead Prevention Resource Guide. Date accessed 5/22/23: <https://ohioaap.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Lead-Resource-Guide-for-Physicians.pdf>

^v Ohio Housing Finance Agency (2021). Housing Stock: Lead [FY 2021 Housing Needs Assessment]. Date accessed 5/1/2023: <https://ohiohome.org/research/housingstock-hna.aspx#lead>