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HB 59 Interested Party Testimony
Ohio House General Government Committee
Tim Johnson, Senior Policy Advocate
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November 13, 2025

Chair Ray, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the Ohio House General Government Committee, my name is Tim Johnson, and I am a senior policy advisor with The Ohio Poverty Law Center. Thank you for allowing me to offer interested party testimony on lead licensure fee schedule in House Bill 59.

Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that has devastating lifelong effects on young children. There is no safe level of lead in a child's blood and there is no cure for lead poisoning. Many states are faced with the complex issue of how to address childhood lead poisoning and Ohio is no different. Over two-thirds of Ohio homes were built before 1980 which means they have potential lead hazards, and over 427,000 of these homes are occupied with children who are under the age of six. Ohio has the second highest number of children testing positive for elevated blooded lead levels in the country.

HB 59 proposes to change the fee amount for five different lead licenses issues by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). While lowering the fee amount for licenses sounds harmless in theory, it could end up jeopardizing a significant amount of federal funding. The current fee structure for lead licenses has been in place since the program's inception in 1994 and brings in approximately \$400,000 annually. There is not another source of funding for Ohio's lead program outside of \$250,000 that is earmarked to go to local communities. A decrease in revenue for ODH will inevitably lead to staff reductions as there will not be the revenue necessary to support the current 5.7 employees in their duties. Without adequate staff to approve licenses in a timely manner, ODH will find itself in violation of its grant agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which could result in a loss of accreditation barring Ohio from being eligible for more than \$60,000,000 it receives annually in Housing and Urban Development Grants (HUD). This would create a devastating two-fold effect. The loss of revenue for ODH would hamper the department's ability to oversee compliance and conduct effective monitoring, putting Ohio children at risk of becoming lead poisoned. Losing HUD grants would see local governments miss out on vital resources to keep their communities safe and their residents healthy.

All Ohio children deserve a future that is free from the dangers of lead poisoning. OPLC has no issue with sponsor's stated goals of looking for ways to reduce barriers to entry and incentivize in-state renewals; we just want to ensure that we do not inadvertently forgo millions in federal funds that help keep our children safe. We urge the committee

to adopt an amendment that does not make any changes to the lead license fee schedule as it currently stands. Thank you for your time, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.