

Strategic Opportunities

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Senate Finance Committee

May 24, 2017

Chairman Oelslager

Vice Chair Manning

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the topic of preemption of local lead laws.

My name is Amy Klaben, the founder and principal of Strategic Opportunities. Our vision is to be the leading change agent and business consultant that creates positive impact within communities, business and people's lives. We do this through resolving social problems by designing creative solutions; creating social impact by crafting and executing programs; and ensuring lasting change by empowering others through collaboration.

My professional background includes 14 years as an attorney and 16 years as President/CEO of Homeport, also known as Columbus Housing Partnership, Inc., a large, multi-faceted non-profit organization that creates, owns, and provides service enriched rental housing, revitalizes neighborhoods, and helps people to become and remain successful homeowners.

I am speaking in opposition to the amendment preempting local lead paint laws in the state budget.

Approximately 55% or 184,000 occupied housing units in Columbus were built prior to 1979 and are assumed to include some lead paint ([US Census Bureau, 2011-15 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates](#)). While many cities in Ohio and the state as a whole have higher percentages of pre-1978 housing stock, due to the size of its population, [Columbus has the fourth highest number of children with lead poisoning](#) out of all cities in Ohio that have tested at least 500 children.

To date, the City of Columbus has not followed either Toledo or Cleveland's approach of requiring rental housing inspections of pre-1978 properties. But it should have the ability

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to do so. Housing is inherently local. Local governments should be permitted to address lead in ways that address their specific situations.

If Representative Merrin's amendment is allowed to remain in H.B. 49, it will undermine and reverse the progress that local governments have made in preventing lead poisoning rather than waiting until children are poisoned; deprive local communities of the right to educate citizens about lead hazards without state approval of their procedures and content; and push a premature amendment through the budget bill.

This issue is too important to be rushed. A legislative lead study group should be allowed to complete the study of the state law and recommend legislation based on careful consideration by stakeholders and experts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

As reported in the Columbus Dispatch, according to the most recent school scorecard issued by the State of Ohio, "Columbus City Schools scored a 'D' and a 'F' for achievement scores, an 'F' for closing gaps regardless of income, race, ethnicity or disability, and an 'A' on overall student progress."⁶ Suburban schools scored much better overall.

Central Ohio families also suffer the ill effects of toxic stress. The 2014 Champion of Children report focused on the challenges of toxic stress impacting children in Franklin County and found that "childhood trauma and stress can be corrosive and damaging to childhood development and success for children in poverty...this can mean lives consumed by stress, anxiety and insecurity, passing from one generation to the next."