

Testimony of Cynthia A. Flaherty  
Secretary, Ohio Healthy Homes Network  
Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Cindy Flaherty, Secretary of the Ohio Healthy Homes Network. I am also a housing consultant, working with a neighborhood based non-profit that to improve housing on the South Side. I have 40 years' experience in the affordable housing field, developing programs and policies most recently at Ohio Housing Finance Agency and prior to that with Fannie Mae's local office.

Years ago, I was a skeptic about residential lead hazards and the incidence of lead poisoning in children. But I have learned even small amounts of lead affect brain development and the effects of lead exposure can't be reversed, only mitigated. This has made me an advocate for more effective prevention and control of lead hazards. Unfortunately, Ohio's lead law, which was a major step in the right direction when it was passed in 2002, is limited because it fails to address prevention of lead hazards. The greatest incidence of lead hazards is in residential housing.

Preventing future generations of children from lead poisoning requires a response at the local, state and national level. The effort to prevent lead poisoning in Ohio's children benefits from collaboration, and the combined contributions of local, state, federal, non-profit, and private partners. We need local responses by health departments and city code enforcement to inspect and monitor housing units. We need a state response to regulate lead hazards through state law, and to provide resources for mitigation not only *after* a child is poisoned, but also to control or remove lead hazards *before* a child is exposed. And we need the federal government to support these efforts with funding and technical expertise.

OHHN commends the City of Toledo for being the first city in Ohio to pass a lead ordinance aimed at prevention. As would be expected with this new approach, there is resistance from property owners. However, the answer is not to circumvent the effort by prohibiting local action, but to work on improving the ordinance and working through the administrative issues.

Childhood lead poisoning is a public health issue, and the public should share in the cost of remediating lead hazards. In the long run, the public will reap the benefits in lower health care costs, better educational achievement and possibly even less crime. On behalf of Ohio Healthy Homes Network, I urge you to remove the House Amendment making the Ohio Department of Health the sole authority to regulate the inspection, enforcement and abatement of lead based paint in Ohio.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.