



**House Bill 388 Proponent Testimony to the Ohio House
Public Health Policy Committee
Gabriella Celeste, Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition
June 3, 2024 – 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 Mathews, Vice-Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and House Public Health Policy 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”) in support of HB 388. As co-chair of the leadership team, along 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.

We commend the General Assembly for its past support of critical investments in primary prevention of childhood lead poisoning – that is, addressing the source of lead exposure rather than using children as lead detectors. Despite impressive progress, however, the urgent problem of child lead poisoning persists in Ohio.

We are grateful to Representatives Baker and White for co-sponsoring HB 388 to address a critical piece that has been missing from Ohio's primary prevention efforts by better ensuring lead safe work practices to protect against childhood lead exposure. Please consider the following.

Ohio's Children & Taxpayers Bear High 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 showed how **lead poisoning costs Ohio nearly \$3 billion** every year in premature mortality and added health care, education, criminal justice, and social assistance costs.

Children are Exposed to Lead in Every Part of the State of Ohio

[Every county in the state](#) has children who have been exposed to lead and who test positive for EBLL (5 or more micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL)). The top 5 Ohio counties with the highest rates of children with EBLLs were Harrison, Cuyahoga, Williams, Clark and Crawford (2022).

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

95% of EBLL cases were children exposed to lead in old housing. Even though lead in residential paint was outlawed in the U.S. in 1978, lead paint dust and paint chips in pre-1978 housing remains the single most toxic source of lead for children.

- About 2/3 of Ohio's housing stock was built before 1980, meaning over 3 million homes (owner and renter-occupied) are estimated to contain potential lead hazards, with **children under 6 years old living in 427,875 of these homes.**^{iv}
- 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.

HB 388 Ensures Lead-Safe Work Practices in Older Homes with the RRP (Renovation, Repair & Painting) Rule

Even though the RRP rule has been law since 2010^v, it has failed to realize its goal of protecting children from accidental lead exposure during home repairs and renovations due to underutilization. HB 388 smartly tackles this failure by transferring administration of RRP from the USEPA to the state of Ohio's Department of Health (ODH) to better educate contractors and other workers about the rule and how to comply effectively in order to keep kids safe during renovation and repair activities in older (pre-1978) homes.

To be clear, the RRP rule was designed to protect children from lead hazards that can be created when lead-based paint is disturbed during renovation activities like sanding, carpentry and window-replacement in pre-1978 structures. The RRP Rule requires lead safe work practices and those who are paid to work on renovation, repair and painting projects (e.g. general contractors, firms and special trade contractors, like painters, plumbers, carpenters and electricians) in homes and child caring facilities built prior to 1978 to be trained and certified in these low-cost, simple but effective lead-safe work practices (e.g. using plastic to cover work spaces, cleaning dust after projects, proper disposal of materials, etc.).

As a state, Ohio is more interested in building a strong workforce and helping businesses use lead safe practices than being punitive. Managing the program locally, rather than relying on federal oversight, would ensure timely, quality customer service, better information, and access to resources for contractors, renovators, and the public. ODH has a strong track record of working with workers to provide training and guidance on lead safe practices and is well positioned to manage the RRP program through its lead licensure program.^{vi} Workers will be able to directly contact state staff with questions. More timely answers will be sensitive to local and state needs, reducing confusion and supporting effective lead practices across the state. Additionally, ODH has experience administering regulatory programs and has established partnerships with other local, state, and regional entities that can provide comprehensive support to lead workers. In short, HB 388 will support business-friendly strategies to connect contractors with RRP training in their communities, provide information about certification, process applications for certification, oversee RRP training programs, investigate complaints and provide public education on lead safe work practices.

Moving administration of the RRP to Ohio is both a low-cost and effective way our state can protect young children from lead hazards. Fifteen other states have already done so for their own citizens protection. For all these reasons, we urge your support of HB 388.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and your leadership in preventing child lead poisoning. We deeply appreciate your support of these efforts and are eager to work in partnership to ensure lead safety for all Ohio children. Please contact me at mgc36@case.edu with any questions.

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- 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} Ohio Housing Finance Agency (2021). Housing Stock: Lead [FY 2021 Housing Needs Assessment at: <https://ohiohome.org/news/documents/2019-HousingNeedsAssessment.pdf> p. 62]. Date accessed 5/1/2023: <https://ohiohome.org/research/housingstock-hna.aspx#lead>
- ^v USEPA Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Program <https://www.epa.gov/lead/lead-renovation-repair-and-painting-program>.
- ^{vi} Similarly, the Ohio General Assembly granted ODH authority to manage the lead licensure program in 1994, which has been very successful ever since.