

Senate Finance Committee  
May 25, 2023  
Testimony

Chair Dolan, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Cheryl Pritchard and I am a member of NOBLE.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I come before you to request that you restore cuts made by the House to the lead abatement fund at the Ohio Department of Health.

This is line item 440527.

I ask that this amount be restored to \$10.8 million in FY24 and \$11.7 million in FY25 **to support lead prevention programs that provide grants to local communities, ensure lead safe work protocols during renovations and repairs, and provide education and resources for parents.**

Lead abatement is designed to permanently eliminate lead-based paint hazards and reduce or eliminate the incidents of lead poisoning.

Exposure to lead at a young age can have devastating effects on children, impacting virtually every aspect of their life.

My daughter Asha, who is currently 38 years old was diagnosed with lead poisoning at the age of two. Asha was raised in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of Cleveland OH. When Asha was a one-year-old she began having violent seizures to which the doctors ultimately diagnosed her with epilepsy, and she was given medication. A year later the doctors stopped her treatment for epilepsy and gave her a new diagnosis "lead poisoning." While doctors warned there would be complications, little did I know that 30+ years later my daughter would still be suffering immensely from the exposure and prognosis.

Because of Asha's exposure to lead at an early age she has dealt with various health issues throughout her life. Some of the health effects that my daughter has experienced in addition to having seizures include, but are not limited to learning and behavioral difficulties, reproductive issues, memory, and concentration issues, etc.

For Asha's entire life she has experienced depression, including postpartum depression more recently, and other serious mental health issues. She has had difficulties in her social interactions, which impacts her ability to make and keep friends. Asha, when attempting to process information often experiences delays and disconnects, which has impacted her ability to read, write and learn, and has ultimately stifled her growth and ability to progress in life.

Regarding reproductive problems, while my daughter has 5 beautiful children, in most of her pregnancies she experienced serious complications including intense pain and has experienced 3 miscarriages. Her most recent child was deemed a miracle baby by doctors. Not only has she had difficulties with pregnancies, but the exposure has also negatively impacted the way that she is able to raise her kids, which unfortunately has generational implications.

I say all of this to say that lead exposure is a serious issue for those that experience it.

Unfortunately, children in Northeast Ohio are being poisoned by lead at rates far above the national average. Although my daughter's exposure was 30+ years ago, her life was and has been forever altered.

By investing in lead abatement, we can prevent other children and families from experiencing what my daughter and my family have experienced. In addition to prevention, investing in lead now will cut future costs to the taxpayers of Ohio. Lead exposure is expensive for all Ohioans. Lead exposure results in significant costs, including incarceration, special education, and loss of earnings; thus, it is important that we invest now!

No child in the State of Ohio should have to go through what my daughter Asha has gone through. Investing in lead abatement is investing in our future!

I ask you once again to please restore any funding that was cut by the House for the purpose of lead abatement.

Thank you.