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Legislature Allocates Funds for Lead Paint Remediation *Funding Will Reduce Lead Paint Poisoning in Pennsylvania Children*

HARRISBURG, PA (July 6, 2023) — The Lead-Free Promise Project issued the following statement in response to the final 2023-24 Pennsylvania budget passed Wednesday night:

“We commend the Pennsylvania Legislature and Governor Shapiro for including **\$2,370,000** for lead paint remediation within the Department of Health. The money will provide low-income homeowners and landlords with resources to remove lead paint-based hazards in older properties.

“More than 70% of homes in Pennsylvania were built before 1978, when lead paint was banned. In many older homes, windows, walls, railings, and baseboards have at least a base coat of lead-based paint. When the paint chips or turns to dust, ingestion or inhalation of it can cause irreversible harm to young children including damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development and learning difficulties. Childhood lead exposure can also cause impulse control and other behavior problems that can be a risk factor for committing later juvenile and adult crime.

“For every dollar spent on removing lead paint-based hazards, between \$17 and \$221 will be returned in health benefits from increased IQ, higher lifetime earnings, tax revenue, and reduced special education. The remediation program is a crucial step to reduce lead poisoning in our children.

“The latest 2021 data available from the Pennsylvania Department of Health shows that nearly 5,000 children birth to under six years old had confirmed elevated blood lead levels. Another nearly 2,000 children had initial elevated blood lead levels without a second confirming test. The actual numbers are likely to be significantly higher because parents continued to take COVID precautions in 2021 and because only 18.8 percent of children in this age group had their blood lead levels tested.

“When analyzed both as a percentage of children tested and as a percentage of the total population, confirmed elevated blood lead levels were also higher for non-Hispanic Black or African-American children. African-American and Hispanic children are disproportionately poisoned because they are more likely to live in older properties with lead-based paint. Areas with the highest cases of elevated blood lead levels include York (8.67% of children under 2); Reading (7.10%); Lancaster (5.18%), and Scranton (5.15%).

“Every year the promise of thousands of young children in Pennsylvania is diminished due to lead paint poisoning. Still today, nearly 8,000 Pennsylvania children, enough to fill the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center to maximum capacity, are poisoned by lead every year. PA children are poisoned at a rate 2.3 times higher than children poisoned in Flint, Michigan at the peak of the city’s crisis.

“Childhood lead poisoning is 100% preventable. Ensuring that all children are tested for lead exposure is a critical first step to getting children the care they need to mitigate the harmful effects of lead poisoning. Less than 20% of children in Pennsylvania are tested for lead. We have been working hard to mandate testing for ALL Pennsylvania children, an important step in ending lead paint poisoning.

“The Lead-Free Promise Project has endorsed Senate Bill 514, which would require all children get tested for blood lead levels before the age of two. It unanimously passed out of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and is now pending Senate floor consideration. We encourage the legislature to pass this legislation.”

The Lead-Free Promise Project (LFPP) launched its over 65-organization statewide coalition in 2021 with the goal of removing lead paint-based hazards from homes and ensuring all children are screened for lead poisoning as part of a comprehensive wellness exam. Learn more at www.paleadfree.org.

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LFPP is part of ThrivingPA.org, a non-partisan, statewide campaign that seeks to improve the quality of and increase equitable access to a coordinated system of health supports, including access to comprehensive perinatal health services, children’s health insurance, nutrition supports and lead screening and abatement.