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## **LEAD POISONING: EARLY TESTING LEADS TO EARLY INTERVENTION**

*Pennsylvania has 2<sup>nd</sup> Highest Number of Kids Poisoned by Lead in the Nation*

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**HARRISBURG, PA (June 3, 2025)** — More than 11,500 Pennsylvania children are irreversibly poisoned by lead every year, primarily through lead paint in their homes. Only through early detection can children get an early start with intervention services that can help offset the behavioral and cognitive challenges that result from lead poisoning.

Unfortunately, based on the Department of Health's most recent Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Report, less than 35% of children in Pennsylvania under age two receive a blood lead test. Proposed legislation in the General Assembly would require all children to be tested for lead twice before age two, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"We must be testing kids twice by the age of two. Kids are mobile, they visit their daycare centers, their family member's homes. We can't just be one and done and think we're going to take care of our kids' futures," said Ruth Ann Norton, President & CEO, Green & Healthy Homes Initiative. "It's important for every child if we want to get them in the classroom ready to learn, earn, and compete for a lifetime, we have to take these early measures."

Pennsylvania continues to rank high for a wrong reason by having the second largest number of children who test positive for lead poisoning each year among all states. Effects of lead poisoning, an invisible threat, can rob children of their future by causing irreversible brain and nervous system damage, learning difficulties, and behavior problems — and there are not nearly enough resources to help suffering families. This proposed legislation would address this issue to ensure that all children in Pennsylvania receive blood tests, which is the only tool we have to confirm lead poisoning and help families mitigate health issues and eliminate further exposure.

Joining the Lead-Free Promise Project was PA Representative Shelby Labs; Ruth Ann Norton, President & CEO, Green & Healthy Homes Initiative; Dr. Jeffrey R. Martin, family medicine

physician; Karalyn McGrorty Derstine, parent advocate; and Deanna Dyer, Health Policy Director, Children First.

“The Lead-Free Promise Project brings together health care providers, municipalities, advocacy organizations, public health entities, health plans, the department of health along with affected families to try and end the scourge of lead poisoning once and for all,” said Dr. Jeffrey R. Martin, family medicine physician. “This bill will help uncover the true extent of the problem, bring it out into the open so we can begin the process of protecting our children and their future.”

“While our son continues to grow and overcome his delays advocating for his needs to be met is a considerable undertaking-- a constant battle made all that much more difficult knowing this was all preventable,” said parent Karalyn McGrorty Derstine. “We can make the choice to prioritize prevention and education. We need preventive measures in the Commonwealth- it’s for the common good.”

Lead-Free Promise Project launched its nearly 80-organization 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 <https://paleadfree.org/>.

*LFPP is part of ThrivingPa.org, a nonpartisan, 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.*

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