

Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition Responds to Governor DeWine's Budget

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We applaud Governor DeWine for shining a spotlight on the serious harm caused to children by lead poisoning and recognizing the need to invest in preventing lead exposure. We are grateful that his budget makes some critical investments to address lead. We agree with the Governor's description of the budget as "just the beginning" of this work. We are excited by the opportunity to support and build on the Governor's lead poisoning prevention initiative.

"There is no safe level of lead in the blood," said Patricia Barnes, Executive Director of the Ohio Healthy Homes Network and co-chair of the [Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition](#). "In children, lead poisoning can cause irreversible brain and nervous system damage, leading to numerous learning and behavioral challenges and lifelong negative impacts. The goal of the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition's is to secure the level of public commitment and investment needed to ensure all Ohio children are safe from lead in their homes and communities."

In accordance with these goals, and in the spirit of building on the foundation created by the Governor's proposal, our [response](#) to the Governor's specific initiatives on lead are as follows:

1. We commend the Governor for preserving existing funding in his budget for the lead hazard abatement program, currently administered by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), and for striving to improve the program by removing some barriers to qualify for it, investing to build a workforce of lead specialists and partnering with the Ohio Housing Finance Agency to administer these funds. However, we are disappointed to see no new funding dedicated to supporting local primary prevention initiatives since we believe the existing lead hazard abatement program could be more effective by partnering with local entities and extending its reach.
2. Ohio lags behind other states in lead screening, so we applaud the Governor's commitment to improve the state's efforts here. It is our understanding and hope that lead screening will be made a priority as the administration re-negotiates the state's contracts with Managed Care Organizations and works with pediatricians and communities to improve screening and testing..
3. We are also grateful for the increased investment in the Department of Developmental Disabilities Early Intervention services for children with elevated blood lead levels. We remain concerned, however, children will not be protected from lead exposure during home renovations due to the lack of federal enforcement of the U.S. EPA Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) rule. We hope Governor DeWine will consider doing as 14 other states have done and take over enforcement of the RRP rule from the federal government. Common RRP activities that disturb lead-based paint (like sanding, cutting, replacing windows, and more) can create hazardous lead dust and chips which can be especially harmful to children. Certified lead-safe renovators protect children through the use of lead-safe work practices.
4. We have a number of questions related to the personal income tax credit proposed by the Governor. While we appreciate the Governor's recognition that achieving a lead-free Ohio will require significant investments from the private sector, we are not sure this is the most effective tool to achieve those

ends. Although the tax credit may have the potential to protect children from lead hazards in older housing, in its current form it may be difficult to use. We urge the Administration to increase its effectiveness as an incentive by allowing the credit to be taken over a period of years, covering all homes built prior to 1978, and permitting families without young children (or a pregnant woman) to use the credit.

“We are eager to work in partnership with Governor DeWine and the Legislature to ensure lead safety for all Ohio children,” said Gabriella Celeste, co-chair of the Ohio Lead-Free Kids Coalition and Policy Director of the Schubert Center for Child Studies. “Over the long run, we urge the Administration to develop a comprehensive statewide plan for lead prevention by bringing the many stakeholders dedicated to child well-being to the table.”

The Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition (#LeadFreeKidsOH) has the following guiding principles for Ohio policy. We believe the state has a responsibility to:

- *Ensure Ohio **families live in lead-safe housing**. To achieve these ends, the state of Ohio needs to adopt a **primary prevention** model designed to prevent childhood lead poisoning.*
- ***Protect children** from lead hazards during renovation, repair, painting, regular maintenance and demolition of pre-1978 homes and child care facilities.*
- *Commit public resources and encourage **state-local, public-private investments** to end lead poisoning.*
- *Ensure that children are **adequately and regularly screened** for lead, and that those children with elevated blood lead levels have **access to appropriate developmental and behavioral supports**.*
- *Create, adopt and implement **a comprehensive statewide strategy** for preventing lead poisoning.*