



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

**Substitute House Bill 33 Testimony to the Ohio Senate  
Health Committee  
Gabriella Celeste, Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition  
May 10, 2023 – Written Submission**

Thank you Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and Senate Health Committee members.

My name is Gabriella Celeste and I offer this testimony as the co-founder and co-chair of the for the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition (“OLFKC”), Policy Director of the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University, and an Interested Party on HB 33 concerning issues related to child lead poisoning prevention and child wellness. As co-chair of the leadership team 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.

While we are encouraged by some of the investments and protections in lead poisoning prevention preserved in the House-passed version of the FY24-25 budget (HB 33), **we urge your support of an amendment (SC1029) to restore the lead abatement GRF ALI (440527), which was flat-funded at \$6.5M per fiscal year, to the full amount included in the As-Introduced budget; specifically, restoring to \$10,818,500 M for FY24 and \$11,652,607 for FY25.** Please consider the following.

**Ohio's Children & Taxpayers Bear the Costs of Lead Exposure**

Ohio ranks **2nd in the U.S.**<sup>i</sup> in the number of children with elevated blood lead levels – twice the national average!<sup>ii</sup>

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.<sup>iii</sup>

The Altarum Institute, a health care research organization, [released an online cost tool in 2019](#) that found Ohio would save an estimated **\$2.8 billion each year** by preventing child lead poisoning with investments in lead abatement and other measures.

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

[Every county in the state](#) has children who have been exposed to lead and who test positive for EBLL. The top 5 Ohio counties with the highest rates of children with EBLLs were Crawford, Harrison, Cuyahoga, Morgan and Clark counties (2019).

Thousands of Ohio children under 6 have been poisoned by lead and continue to be exposed to lead hazards. In just one year, *2,900 Ohio children had confirmed elevated blood lead levels (EBLL)*. And this number is an undercount as only about 50%- 60% of high-risk children are even tested for lead and, since this most recent lead testing data came from 2020, when there was a significant drop in lead testing due to the pandemic.

### **Ohio's Old Housing is the Most Common Course of Child Lead Poisoning**

95% of EBLL cases were children exposed to lead in old housing. Lead in residential paint was not outlawed in the U.S. until 1978. Today, lead paint dust and paint chips in pre-1978 housing remains the single most toxic source of lead for children.

- Nearly 2/3 of Ohio's housing stock built before 1980, meaning 3.5 million homes are estimated to contain potential lead hazards, with children under 6 years old living in over 400,000 of these units.<sup>iv</sup>
- 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.

### **Despite Impressive Progress, the Urgent Problem of Child Lead Poisoning Persists in Ohio**

We commend the Governor and his [Lead Advisory Committee](#) for making child lead prevention a priority, as well as the General Assembly for supporting critical investments in primary prevention – that is, addressing the source of lead exposure rather than using children as lead detectors. This includes important progress like:

- creating a brand-new Ohio Lead Safe Home Fund which allowed seven grantees across the state to receive \$6.8M in total funding to build on existing lead poisoning prevention efforts or create new ones. The first round of grantees were in Allen, Clark, Erie, Franklin, Lucas, and Marion counties and included a variety of lead prevention activities (more details [here](#));
- removing lead in homes with children in 73 counties through the SCHIP lead hazard control program; and,
- fostering local innovation with the lead safe home fund in Cleveland and Toledo's Historic South project. Still, with every region of Ohio being harmed by lead, we clearly have more work to do.

**Restoring the lead abatement line in the HB 33 budget bill with an additional \$8.5 million over the biennium helps to ensure we maintain the momentum to protecting children from lead.** Specifically, this funding will:

- Incentivize local solutions to preventing lead poisoning in their own communities through the expansion of Ohio's Lead Safe Home Fund grants to local public and private partners;
- Ensure lead safe work practices during older home renovation, repairs, and painting (RRP); and,
- Provide vital education and supports to families of children with lead exposure, consistent with the lowering of the EBLL from 5 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ) to to 3.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ .

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please contact me at [mgc36@case.edu](mailto:mgc36@case.edu) with any questions.

---

<sup>i</sup> 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&eid=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](https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2021/09/28/ohio-kids-show-elevated-lead-blood-levels-at-more-than-twice-the-national-rate-study-finds/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eid=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)

<sup>ii</sup> 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>

<sup>iii</sup> 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>

<sup>iv</sup> Ohio Housing Finance Agency (2021). Housing Stock: Lead [FY 2021 Housing Needs Assessment]. Date accessed 5/1/2023: <https://ohiohome.org/research/housingstock-hna.aspx#lead>