

December 2, 2019

Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: B23-0407

Lead Hazard Prevention and Elimination Amendment Act of 2019

Dear Councilmembers:

The undersigned organizations and individuals urge you to support the Lead Hazard Prevention and Elimination Amendment Act of 2019. This bill would create stronger protections against lead-based paint hazards in rental housing and help prevent devastating harm to children from lead poisoning.

No amount of lead is safe for a child. Lead exposure from paint dust or peeling paint can permanently disrupt a child's growth and learning. As a result, kids who are exposed to lead—even children who are exposed when their mom is pregnant—often struggle in school and can't reach their potential in the workplace.

Thanks to the Council's leadership in the past, the District has made progress in reducing lead hazards. Yet much remains to be done, as these hazards, particularly lead-based paint, continue to present a grave risk to the District's children. It has been estimated that approximately 80% of District housing was built prior to 1978 (when lead-based paint was restricted) and is likely to contain lead-based paint hazards.¹ Every year District children test positive for elevated blood lead levels, leaving them with the potential for serious future health consequences.

Too often children are playing the role of "lead detector." Inspections and remediation are occurring *after* a child tests for an elevated blood lead level and suffers harm from lead poisoning. An advisory committee for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made clear that "[s]creening children for elevated [blood lead levels] BLLs and dealing with their housing only when their BLL is already elevated should no longer be acceptable practice."²

Too often landlords aren't complying with the District's lead laws. A DOEE audit found that more than 70% of the audited landlords weren't complying with basic lead notice documentation requirements.³ We have seen too many cases where landlords have taken months or even years to remediate lead-paint hazards or have failed to do so altogether.

As the CDC’s advisory committee has said, our goal should be “zero tolerance for lead hazards.”⁴ The proposed bill would help the District reach this vital goal. It would create more proactive inspections and remediation, attacking the problem *before* children suffer lead poisoning. It would also strengthen enforcement mechanisms to help ensure landlords comply with the District’s lead laws.

Please vote for the Lead Hazard Prevention and Elimination Amendment Act of 2019. It will help keep District residents, especially our children, safe.

Respectfully submitted,

**American Academy of
Pediatrics, DC Chapter**

Children’s National Hospital

**Early Childhood Innovation
Network**

**MedStar Georgetown
University Hospital Division
of Child and Adolescent
Psychiatry**

**Advocates for Justice and
Education, Inc.**

Bread for the City

Children’s Law Center

Empower DC

Georgetown Youth Advocates

**Green & Health Homes
Initiative**

**Latino Economic
Development Center**

**Legal Aid Society of the
District of Columbia**

Rising for Justice

Yachad

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¹ See National Center for Healthy Housing, 2017 DC Healthy Housing Fact Sheet, available at https://nchh.org/resource-library/fact-sheet_state-healthy-housing_2018_dc.pdf ; Columbia Law School Health Justice Advocacy Clinic, "The Cost of Childhood Lead Poisoning in Washington DC," available at https://www.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/clinics/health-advocacy/washington_dc.pdf .

² CDC Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention, "Low Level Exposure Harms Children: A Renewed Call for Primary Prevention," at ix, 15-16 (Jan. 4, 2012), available at https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/acclpp/final_document_030712.pdf .

³ Letter from Mayor Bowser to Chairman Mendelson, attachment at 5 (Oct. 7, 2015), available at <http://lms.dccouncil.us/Download/34664/RC21-0037-Introduction.pdf> .

⁴ Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Low Level Lead Exposure Harms Children: A Renewed Call for Primary Prevention," at 34 (Jan. 4, 2012), available at: https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/ACCLPP/Final_Document_030712.pdf .

