



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, October 25, 2022

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Advocates Call on New York State Leaders to Address Lead Poisoning Crisis as State Leads Nation in Older Housing & Children With Elevated Blood Lead Levels

ALBANY, NY — New York has more children with elevated blood lead levels than any other state in the U.S. Children across the state continue to needlessly suffer permanent neurological damage from exposure to lead in old paint, dust, and drinking water in their homes. Moreover, nearly 70 percent of these lead-poisoned children come from underserved neighborhoods; Black, Latino, and Asian children account for more than 80 percent of newly identified cases of lead poisoning in children under six years old. For decades, the state has largely ignored this lead poisoning crisis plaguing our children in low-income communities and communities of color across the state.

This October marks the **10th Anniversary of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Awareness Week**. During the **week of October 23-29**, members of the **Lead Free Kids New York (LFKNY)** coalition held news conferences in four upstate cities to promote awareness, and lead testing of children and older housing. As elected officials and leaders in Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse and Utica stood with parents and LFKNY activists demanding action, they pressed New York State leaders to address primary prevention of lead poisoning before children are sickened.

On **Thursday, October 27th, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.**, advocates will hold a statewide Lead Poisoning Prevention Awareness Week webinar to discuss an action plan. Registration link: www.bit.ly/LFKNY_LPPW.

This year we need our state leaders to close loopholes and strengthen enforcement of existing lead poisoning prevention laws. At their Capitol press conference in Albany Tuesday, LFKNY leaders asked state leaders to take action in several ways:

- We need to close the loophole that allows property owners to avoid knowing there is lead-based paint in the residence.
- We need leaders to establish standards for lead-safe renovation, repair and painting of residential properties.
- We need to ensure such victims of lead poisoning will be adequately compensated for medical bills and other lead-exposure related expenses and damages.

In the longer term, lead-exposed people face organ damage, heart disease, and even cancer. These are personal and familial hardships, which translate into increased costs to our community and state: increased educational costs to support children who require it, increased health care costs to treat diseases to which lead poisoning contributes, and more. According to Columbia University, It costs Empire State taxpayers \$904 million annually to address the short and long-term lead poisoning healthcare costs associated with NY children identified with elevated blood lead levels.

LFKNY advocates said New York state leaders should prioritize lead poisoning prevention and mitigation in their upcoming 2023-2024 New York State Budget proposal, to prevent more innocent childhood victims of preventable lead poisoning:



1. Increasing funding to New York's children's environmental health centers.
2. Providing resources to landlords to conduct lead abatement.
3. Financially supporting healthcare costs of New York's lead-exposed children and families.
4. Filling the seven vacancies on the New York State Lead Poisoning Prevention Advisory Council.

"An average of 2,233 children test positive for elevated blood lead levels each year in New York City, with the majority being children of color," said **Lonnie Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at WE ACT for Environmental Justice**. "It's time for our state leaders to get aggressive on childhood lead poisoning, from enforcing inspections for lead paint and the requisite remediation to supporting lead-exposed families. We need to stop poisoning our children."

"New York has more children with elevated blood lead levels than any other State in the nation, with children of color and children living in poverty at a particularly high risk of childhood lead exposure and poisoning – a grave, immoral and entirely preventable threat to the health and well-being of New York's most marginalized children and families," said **Kercena A. Dozier, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund – New York**. "During National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week and all year long, the Children's Defense Fund – New York implores our elected officials to act swiftly to protect the youngest New Yorkers from the harmful effects of lead – particularly our Black and Brown children, who are disparately affected by childhood lead exposure and poisoning in our State. It is well past time to begin rectifying this racial, environmental and moral injustice."

"More than fifty years after New York State banned lead paint, kids are still being poisoned simply by living in their homes. This is unacceptable," warned **Bobbi Wilding, Executive Director of Albany-based Clean+Healthy**. "We call on Governor Hochul, state legislators, the Department of Health and Housing and Community Renewal to act swiftly before yet another generation faces loss of IQ and other lifelong chronic illnesses."

"New York State has the oldest and most lead impacted housing stock in the United States and it is critical to advocate for lead poisoning prevention and mitigation efforts at the state level, said **Paul Webster, Policy Director of Clean+Healthy**, an Albany based environmental advocacy organization. "A half century of inaction on this issue cannot continue, especially as the federal government sent Governor Hochul and New York State billions in environmental funding in 2021 that can be used for preventing avoidable lead poisoning."

Amanda Reddy, NCHH's Executive Director:

"There is no safe blood lead level in children, and the bad news is that we know that tens of thousands of children in New York are exposed to lead each year. The good news is that this is a problem we can solve, and National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is an opportunity to focus the conversation around the policies, programs, and practices we can and should implement at the local, state, and national levels to end childhood lead exposure."

The Lead Free Kids New York Coalition (LFKNY) looks forward to working with New York State leaders in executing a policy and budget agenda this year to mitigate and prevent childhood lead poisoning. LFKNY is a coalition of individuals and organizations working to end childhood lead exposure in New York, composed of parents, teachers, healthcare workers, advocates, lawyers, organizations serving children, and others. We work statewide to identify and advocate for state level policy solutions to lead poisoning in housing and other settings within the community.

The Lead Free Kids Coalition members include: Clean+Healthy, Children's Defense Fund, and WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

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