

PREVENTING LEAD POISONING IN OUR CHILDREN

In her FY 2021 budget proposal, the governor announced a recommended investment in lead exposure prevention for children in our state.

BACKGROUND

Even low levels of lead exposure can affect IQ, attention span and academic achievement in children. Exposure to high levels can even result in brain damage and death.

Our state's current lead poisoning prevention efforts have resulted in substantial decreases in elevated blood lead levels in the past decade. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of Michigan children with blood levels greater than or equal to 5 ug/dL (micrograms per deciliter) and 10 ug/dL decreased by more than 50%.[1] Experts agree that when it comes to the health and development of our children, there is no safe level of lead.

Yet lead exposure remains a major challenge. It is estimated that 1.5 million housing units in Michigan contain lead,[2] and that Michigan still has more than 370,000 high-risk housing units with children ages six or under. It is critical that we address lead hazards in housing before a child is ever exposed. Without proper investment, Michigan will not have the ability to bring down rates of elevated blood lead levels.

Part of the solution lies in increased enforcement around lead-safe homes. But a second critical part lies in making funding available for landlords and homeowners to afford lead remediation, which on average costs more than \$20,000 per unit.

PROPOSED ACTION

The governor's recommended one-time investment will enhance our state's ability to eliminate lead poisoning by encouraging the injection of private capital into lead remediation efforts.

This fund will establish a loan loss reserve for private lenders, encouraging lending for lead remediation at below-market interest rates. This model builds on the success of the Michigan Saves program, which unlocked \$250M of lending for more than 15,000 residents across the state using just \$11M of state seed funding. It also builds on the example of other states such as Massachusetts and Maryland that have established similar funds and accordingly reduced lead exposures.

Community partners, foundations and investors have already expressed an interest in joining forces with MDHHS and other government agencies. Without this funding, the state will not be able to adequately address and eradicate child lead poisoning in Michigan for our children today and for future generations.

TOTAL EXECUTIVE OFFICE RECOMMENDATION

\$10 million in General Fund dollars.

[1] CDC National Childhood Blood Lead Surveillance Data, <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/data/national.htm>.

[2] According to the American Healthy Housing Survey (AHHS), counting occupied multifamily and single-family housing units. https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/AHHS_REPORT.PDF.