

Proposed Ordinance to Weaken Protections for Children with Lead Poisoning
OR-2019-0032

New Haven Legal Assistance Association (NHLAA) is calling for the Board of Alders to consider the following:

** Lead poisoning, starting at 5 micrograms per deciliter, is known to cause lifelong harm to children, if not remediated. It affects their developing brains and can cause permanent cognitive and behavioral impacts.

** The City of New Haven has the highest levels of lead poisoned children in the state, with chipping and flaking lead paint found in its old housing stock.

** The threat of lead poisoning is a public health crisis that disproportionately impacts low-income and Black and Hispanic communities who have higher exposure to environmental contaminants and often live in renter-occupied units that are owned by absentee landlords.

We respectfully request that you:

1. **Stop the proposed ordinance in its current form:**

- New Haven has had the most protective laws in the state, but now the City is proposing a new ordinance that will provide minimal protections for children with blood poisoning. Children with blood lead levels of 20 µg/dL or above get full protections under this law. Children with blood lead levels of under 20 µg/dL are entitled to educational materials only.
- New Haven's current law provides far greater protections. It **REQUIRES** full protections for children starting at level 5 µg/dL. That means all children with blood poisoning have the right to full inspections and abatement orders from the Health Department.
- The proposed ordinance takes away this right to full protection and instead gives the Health Department **DISCRETION** to not give full protections to children at below level 20 µg/dL. This is effectively taking away the protections that children in our city have.
- We request that you oppose any ordinance that does not require the City Health Department to take full action, including inspection, abatement and enforcement, when blood lead poisoning levels are at 5 µg/dL.

2. **Ensured a date-driven, inclusive deliberation process before deciding that it is too expensive to protect our children from lead blood poisoning:**

- The City has stated in testimony that it seeks to loosen the protections for children to save money. This is immoral and will cost our city more in the long-run in terms of such things as medical expenses and special education.
- The current law requires a Lead Advisory Committee to provide expertise and input on lead policies. This Lead Advisory Committee has not had the opportunity to review and advise on this proposed bill.
- The Committee needs: (1) to be provided the requested data, which to date has never been made public at all, with such information as the numbers of children impacted by lead poisoning, the number of inspections the Health Department has complete, and the number of homes that are fixed and at what cost; and (2) to meet with such complete information as the numbers of children impacted by lead poisoning, the number of inspections the Health Department has complete, and the number of homes that are fixed and at what cost; and (2) what, if any, changes need to be made to the current law.