

February 12, 2016

Dear Governor Christie:

We the undersigned request you appropriate the \$10 million collected to the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund in the FY2017 state budget. We also urge you to support passage of legislation sponsored by Senator Shirley Turner that would enable municipalities to inspect one and two bedroom family rentals for lead. Combined, these two measures would protect thousands of children who are exposed to lead poisoning on a daily basis.

In 2004, the State of New Jersey introduced the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund (LHCAF). This fund was created to allocate resources to remove lead from older homes by offering deferred payment loans or grants to property owners. It also financed home inspections, emergency relocations for affected families, and efforts to educate the public about the risks of living in homes built before lead-based paints were banned in 1978.

Unfortunately, by 2014, no funds were appropriated to the LHCAF, eliminating a significant resource for families and property owners trying to address lead hazards. **Since 2004, over \$53 million earmarked for the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund, as required by law, was diverted to the state's general treasury to balance the budget.** No new funding stream is necessary as the revenue source for the LHCAF comes from a 50 cent per gallon user fee on paint sold in NJ. We simply ask that the collected funds be used for their intended purpose.

Elevated levels of highly toxic lead have been found in more than 3,100 young children in New Jersey so far this year. According to new data, thirteen New Jersey communities have higher percentages of children with elevated levels of lead in their blood in 2014 than Flint, Michigan did in 2015 – Irvington, Trenton, Newark, Paterson, Plainfield, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Atlantic City, New Brunswick and Passaic, plus Cumberland and Salem Counties.

Financially, cleaning up lead paint hazards for New Jersey's children makes enormous fiscal sense. New Jersey taxpayers can spend \$12,000, at most, to make a home lead safe, or we can spend \$32,000 per year for each child who is poisoned by lead paint. It is a waste of limited resources to spend three times, maybe more, in healthcare and remedial education costs, than it is to prevent lead poisoning in children. As a state, we pay even more for the additional cost of the life-long effects of this toxin.

The State of New Jersey has a moral and legal responsibility to protect our children from lead poisoning. We urge you to help rid our communities of this toxic poison by supporting the expansion of home rental inspections and keeping the appropriation of \$10 million to the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund intact.

Sincerely,

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Amanda Colon,
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