



June 16, 2021

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Chairman of the Senate Banking and Housing and Urban Development Committee
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: New National Lead Safe Home Fund in the FY2022 Financial Services Appropriations Bill within the Treasury Department

Dear Chairman Brown:

We write to share our strong support for establishing a new \$100 million National Lead Safe Home Fund within the Department of Treasury in the FY2022 Financial Services Appropriations bill. We respectfully request that you work with Chairman Van Hollen to ensure this fund is included in the legislation to protect millions of children and families exposed to lead and to advance the prevention of childhood lead poisoning.

As you know, federal guidance from the CDC is clear that there is no amount of lead exposure that has been found to be safe for human exposure. Even at very low levels, exposure is linked to irreversible neurological damage and developmental delays in children and can seriously harm people of any age. Today, about half a million American children between the ages of 1 and 5 have a blood-lead level that exceeds 5 µg/dL, the reference level set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for defining an elevated blood lead level.¹ Moreover, in cities like Cleveland, this sobering figure is likely to be significantly underestimated because many children at risk for lead poisoning are not tested appropriately and therefore go undetected.

Lead poisoning is a public health, education, and workforce crisis with a housing solution. It is estimated that over 23 million households in the United States contain lead hazards. Most of these homes are in disadvantaged, disinvested communities, where black and other families of color disproportionately reside. Any housing in the country built prior to 1978 is likely to contain lead paint, comprising the majority of housing in many states—65% of Ohio housing, 66% of Illinois housing, and 58% of West Virginia housing, for example.² Experts predict that COVID-19 has only exacerbated lead exposure, as people were forced to stay in their homes throughout the pandemic. As families sought refuge in their homes to shield and protect their health, far too many living in unhealthy conditions were faced with greater exposure.

Although the use of residential lead-based paint was long ago banned nationally, its harmful legacy lives on. In Ohio, more than two-thirds, or 67%, of homes were built before lead-based paint was banned in 1978. This includes 421,640 homes with young children present who are at risk of lead exposure.³ In 2019, more than 3,500 Ohio children tested had blood-lead levels at or above the CDC

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/blood-lead-levels.htm>

² <https://nchh.org/resources/?resource-term=lead&resource-search=1>

³ <https://ohiohome.org/hna-20/executivesummary-hna.aspx>



reference level, with many more still to be tested.⁴ The annual cost of childhood lead exposure in the U.S. is \$84 billion as a result of reduced lifetime productivity, increased health care and social assistance spending, and premature mortality.⁵

Luckily, solutions to lead poisoning exist. By repairing older homes, we can substantially cut the number of children who are irreparably harmed by exposure and provide a pathway to greater opportunities for health and racial equity. But these repairs come at a cost, and no one entity or agency alone can make it happen. This is an issue that requires attention, investment, and alignment of multiple federal agencies and departments, as well as partnerships across multiple levels of government and the private sector.

The **National Lead Safe Home Fund** would be a new funding source established within the Treasury Department to provide flexible grant funding to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations to proactively support low-income property owners in making the necessary home repairs to prevent lead poisoning. Many local municipalities have worked to enact statutes that require residential lead hazard inspections, remediation, and certification of lead-safe status, especially in rental properties. However, currently existing resources to support property owners—many of whom are low-income themselves—are not adequate to meet the need. Often, loan criteria cannot be met or the process for accessing funds can be so challenging that the remediation ultimately does not occur. The new National Lead Safe Home Fund would enable non-profit organizations across the country to disseminate funds to low-income property owners to remediate lead quickly and effectively while also creating sustained jobs for local contractors, inspectors, and other lead safe work professionals. This funding source would complement ongoing efforts through HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes and enable local communities to leverage investments from banks, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), nonprofit health systems and other private-sector agencies to create new home repair financial products that include low-cost, low-dollar loans, grants, and incentives to support home repairs. In addition to making tens of thousands of homes lead safe, the fund could unlock vital investment tools for the nation's aging housing stock while contributing to job creation and economic mobility in impacted communities through trainings in inspection, specialized cleaning, and home repair as well as new jobs for window manufacturers, window installers, and contract workers.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support this appropriations request in the FY2022 Financial Services bill.

Sincerely,

Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition

⁴ [Healthy+Homes+-+Lead+n+Real+Estate+-+What+you+Need+to+Know.pdf](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/OHOOD/2021/01/30/file_attachments/1677040/Lead%20Report%20FINAL.pdf);
https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/OHOOD/2021/01/30/file_attachments/1677040/Lead%20Report%20FINAL.pdf

⁵ <https://altarum.org/news/new-online-tool-calculates-cost-and-economic-benefits-preventing-childhood-lead-exposure-united>



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