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ADVOCATES, COUNTY EXECUTIVES, PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS RENEW CALL TO FULLY FUND CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

**2019 State Law Lowering Actionable Child Blood Level to 5 Micrograms/Deciliter
Remains Grossly Underfunded by New York State**

**Thousands of Children With Elevated Blood Lead Levels Remain at Risk Without
State Funding to Enable Investigations, Mitigation and Medical Intervention**

**New York City Lowers Actionable Blood Lead Level to CDC Recommended Rate
of 3.5 Micrograms/Deciliter; Actionable Exposures Expected to Increase by 50%**

(Albany, New York) County leaders, local public health officials, the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning and Lead Free Kids New York joined together again today to renew their call for the State Legislature to increase funding to protect children from lead poisoning.

High blood lead levels in children cause both short- and long-term harm, ranging from anemia, nausea, hair loss, confusion, and muscle weakness to permanent serious damage to the brain, kidneys and bone marrow. Long term exposure to high levels can be fatal. The group of officials and advocates is calling for an additional \$30.3 million in state funds to support blood lead level activities.

A law enacted in 2019 designed to better protect children from lead poisoning was never fully funded, leaving thousands of New York children under the age of 6 at risk of lead poisoning. The law lowered from 10 to 5 micrograms per deciliter the actionable blood lead level (BLL) necessary to trigger numerous public health interventions ranging from follow-up testing and clinical care coordination to environmental investigation of lead sources and management of abatement activities — services which are provided by local health departments (LHDs). The lowering of the rate significantly increased the number of children statewide with a BLL that triggers mandatory intervention.

The CDC now recommends an actionable blood lead level of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter, which is 30% lower than New York State's 2019-enacted standard. New York City recently lowered its actionable standard to the CDC recommendation—a move that is expected to increase actionable cases by as much as 50%.

The estimated cost to implement the 2019 BLL law of 5 micrograms per deciliter is \$40 million annually; however, the state provided just \$9.7million, leaving a \$30.3 million gap and creating a significant barrier to effective implementation of the law.

New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) President and Onondaga County Commissioner of Health Dr. Indu Gupta said: “We must convince the Legislature to act now. The health and welfare of thousands of children provides clear impetus for immediate redress. We know there are many important issues to be resolved over the next few days, and properly funding New York State’s 2019 BLL law must be among them.”

New York State Association of Counties Executive Director Stephen Acquario said: “The New York State Legislature took an important step to protect children from the harmful effects of high levels of lead exposure by lowering the actionable blood lead level in the 2019 State Budget. However, local health departments cannot implement this more protective standard without additional resources. As the Governor and State Legislature enter the final stage of budget negotiations, we call on them to increase the appropriation for lead poisoning prevention activities to \$40 million to support counties in performing the critical public health interventions that help to keep our children safe from lead hazards.”

A comprehensive package of public health investments identified by NYSACHO, termed the “PREPARE Act,” includes a call for an additional \$30.3 million to support child lead poisoning prevention activities. The full PREPARE Act can be found at https://www.nysacho.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PREPARE-Act-Canva_12.22.21.pdf.

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