



**VIA FAX [518 474-8099] AND EMAIL**

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September 15, 2008

Terryl Brown Clemons, Esq.  
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Executive Chamber  
Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

**Re: A.6399-C (Gantt)/S.6350-B (Robach), Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act**

Dear Ms. Clemons:

The Children's Defense Fund- New York (CDF-NY) applauds Governor Patterson for his commitment to New York's children through the landmark passage of the Child Health Plus expansion with state-only dollars earlier this year. We appreciate that the Governor continued that commitment even in this difficult economic climate by not altering or reducing the expansion or its affordable premiums for families in the recent Special Session. As such, we urge that you recommend that Governor Patterson carry on his dedication to the health of New York's children by approving the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act.

The mission of CDF is to Leave No Child Behind® and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. The New York office of CDF began fifteen years ago focused on the single issue of improving the health of New York's children and working families. Since then, we have expanded to address the variety of factors that confronted by children living in poverty. To that end, CDF-NY believes strongly that we must protect our children, particularly those living in low-income housing, from dangerous environmental exposures. We also know that New York's black and Latino children are disproportionately affected by the issue of lead poisoning and exposure. We know that all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity or family income, should be able to live in affordable housing without being regularly exposed to chemicals that can seriously affect their health and development. If

we are to give all of our children a fair chance at reaching their full potential, we must ensure that they are able to live and grow in homes free of toxic and dangerous elements.

Lead poisoning remains an epidemic in New York, with thousands of children documented as poisoned for the first time each year and likely many more children harmed whose exposure goes unreported. Even in trace amounts lead causes irreversible damage to young children. Exposure to lead results in illness and injury, permanent IQ loss, learning and behavioral problems, and in the most severe cases, coma and death. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has called lead the "number one environmental threat to the health of children in the United States."

New York needs to move to a focus on primary prevention and away from a testing and intervention model. We can do much better than waiting for children to be harmed, sometimes permanently, before we take action to protect them.

This legislation would build upon existing programs to require the state to maximize its resources by targeting the areas in the state with the greatest number of lead poisoned children; creating and implementing local prevention plans that fit the needs and resources of impacted communities; and provide modest resources for property owners to address lead hazards in housing.

We urge the Governor to approve this legislation to protect children—particularly poor and minority children—so their physical, intellectual and emotional well being are safeguarded and they may develop unimpeded.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Emma Jordan-Simpson  
Executive Director  
The Children's Defense Fund- New York