

LDA

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Dear Ms. Clemons:

We urge that the Governor approve the Gantt-Robach (A.6399-C/S.6350-B) Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act. This legislation will move the state to preventing, not responding to, lead poisoning.

Each year some 5,000 children are newly identified as lead poisoned in New York State, about half outside of New York City. Experts believe many more children are poisoned each year but undetected since not all eligible children are screened for lead as required under law. Current law requires local health departments to look for the source of lead only *after a child has been identified as lead poisoned through a blood test.*

This legislation will require the state to develop childhood lead poisoning prevention plans for the top 30 “hot spots” for lead, identify the sources of lead in these communities and require elimination of lead hazards before children are poisoned. The bill would also improve children’s lead screening and reporting and provide modest tax credits to assist low income property owners in capital improvements to eliminate lead hazards. And most important during a time of budget strains, this legislation **will not add financial burdens to local governments and will allow the state to access federal HUD grants for the first time to offset costs of implementation while also reducing health care, special education, juvenile and criminal justice costs.**

Since New York began regularly testing young children in the early 1990s, more than 200,000 children have been identified as being lead poisoned. The vast majority of the children who have been poisoned outside of New York City live in “pockets” of lead poisoning located in just a few cities (Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, Amsterdam, Schenectady, Newburgh, Yonkers, Syracuse, and Utica). Overwhelmingly these children are poor and African American or Latino.

The Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act targets the solution to the problem by using the Department of Health’s data mapping capabilities and builds upon current pilot programs. When fully implemented, this legislation will prevent tens of thousands of New York’s most vulnerable children from the life-long damage caused by lead poisoning.

We urge the Governor to sign Gantt-Robach (A.6399-C/S.6350-B) – *the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act* – into law.