

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK



DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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Chief Legislative Counsel

ELIZABETH DEARS KENT, ESQ.
Senior Vice President
Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

MORRIS M. AUSTER, ESQ.
Counsel

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Vice President
Public Health and Education

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Associate Director for Policy

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Legislative Consultant

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Program Coordinator
Smoking Cessation Program

RONALD P. PUCHERELLI
Program Administrator
Health Information Technology

William R. Abrams
Executive Vice-President/ Executive Director

August 21, 2008

Terryl Brown Clemons, JD. MBA
Counsel to Governor David A. Paterson
The Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

RE: S.6350/ A.6399-C - AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to establishing the childhood lead poisoning primary prevention and safe housing act; to amend the state finance law, in relation to establishing the childhood lead poisoning primary prevention and safe housing fund; to amend the tax law, in relation to authorizing a credit for lead hazard reduction activities; and providing for the repeal of certain provisions upon expiration thereof

Dear Ms. Clemons:

I am writing on behalf of the Medical Society of the State of New York to urge you to recommend to the Governor that he sign into law S.6350/ A.6399-C, a measure that would help to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in the state through primary prevention measures that include financial assistance to landlords and homeowners for lead-based paint hazard remediation in pre-1978 housing, screening persons at risk of lead poisoning and public awareness and education.

Lead poisoning of children is one of the most prevalent and preventable environmental diseases in New York State. More than 10,000 children in New York with levels of lead in their blood at 10 micrograms per deciliter were newly identified in 2001. Only about one-third of children are receiving the lead screenings that are Required by law and, therefore, the actual number of children affected by the ingestion of lead is most likely Greater than reported. Prevention is the only effective way to protect children from irreversible damage. Unless lead poisoning is prevented, elevated blood levels will result in impairment of the ability to think, concentrate, and learn.

Medical research has shown that children can suffer permanent, irreparable damage at blood levels even lower than 10 micrograms per deciliter, and that there is no level of lead ingestion which is without adverse Impact. Fetal injuries from lead paint can occur if women have elevated levels during pregnancy. Therefore, intervention measures that wait until children have been exposed have limited benefits and eliminating lead hazards before children are exposed by means of primary prevention is recommended by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although lead-based paint was banned for residential use in 1978, New York State has both the largest percentage and the largest number of older housing units with lead paint in the United States, affecting urban, suburban and rural areas of the state.

For these reasons, the Medical Society of the State of New York urges you to recommend to the Governor that he sign this bill into law.

Respectfully submitted,

GERARD L. CONWAY, ESQ.