



# National Center for Healthy Housing

August 19, 2008

Governor Paterson  
c/o Terryl Brown Clemons, Esquire  
Acting Counsel  
Executive Chamber, Second Floor  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224  
[By email: [Legislative.Secretary@chamber.state.ny.us](mailto:Legislative.Secretary@chamber.state.ny.us)]

Dear Governor Paterson:

On behalf of the National Center for Healthy Housing, I am writing to urge you to approve the Gantt-Robach (A.6399-C/S.6350-B) Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act. Signing this legislation into law will protect thousands of New York children from lifelong learning disabilities and behavioral problems. The law will also help leverage significant federal resources by ensuring that the state meets federal eligibility requirements for lead poisoning prevention funds.

Section 7 of the Act amends Public Health Law Section 1378 to provide the Department of Health with the authority to administer the EPA lead-based paint certification programs in the state. With this authority, the state will become eligible for as much as \$7 million in lead hazard control grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Since the inception of HUD's grant program in 1993, New York State has been ineligible for such funding due to the lack of enabling legislation.

The legislation also requires 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 removal of lead hazards before children are poisoned. This is consistent with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) strategy to eliminate childhood lead poisoning by 2010 and once again may better position the state for increased primary prevention funding from CDC. The bill also provides modest tax credits to assist low-income property owners in capital improvements to eliminate lead hazards. Most importantly, during a time of difficult budget cuts, there are no unfunded local mandates; and any new state obligations are dependent upon funding being made available. As mentioned previously, this legislation is unique in that it actually positions the state for significant resources.

Since New York began regularly testing young children for lead in the blood 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

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located in just a few cities (Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, Newburgh, Yonkers, Syracuse, and Utica).

State and local officials and advocacy organizations have carefully pinpointed the highest risk neighborhoods and stand ready to cost-effectively control lead hazards in these target areas. NCHH has been working with the State Department of Health to implement a primary prevention pilot program. Early findings suggest that the initiative is increasing awareness of lead hazards and driving action to reduce lead hazards in housing by leveraging the investment of property owners and others.

The legislation fills a critical missing piece of the puzzle for the State of New York and will significantly bolster efforts in the state to eliminate this preventable disease. NCHH stands ready to assist the State and its partners with implementing this important piece of legislation. I urge you to sign the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Morley  
Executive Director  
National Center for Healthy Housing

CC: Andrew M. Cuomo, Attorney General, State of New York