

TESTIMONY

NJ Senate and Budget Appropriations Committee

April 25, 2023

Contact: Yvette Jordan

Dear Committee Chair Sarlo and Vice-Chairperson Cunningham,

My name is Yvette Jordan, and I am the Chairperson of Newark Education Workers Caucus, a Steering Committee member and Co-Chair of Lead-Free NJ's Advocacy Committee and a history teacher in Newark, NJ. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer written testimony.

Lead exposure undermines public health, and is a particularly acute issue in communities burdened by systemic inequities. Every New Jerseyan deserves to live in a thriving community and a lead-free neighborhood. According to the New Jersey Health Department (NJDOH), between July 2020 to June 2021, the five largest municipalities with the highest percent of children under 6 years of age with an elevated blood lead level at or above 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter were **Trenton (6.4%), East Orange (5.3%), Irvington (5.2%), Plainfield (4%) and Paterson (3.6%)**¹ and this number is still expected to rise.

Last year, members of the Lead-Free NJ collaborative requested that the State of New Jersey allocate \$600 million from its American Rescue Plan funds to remediate lead in homes, replace lead service lines, and educate residents.

While members applaud the legislature for awarding \$170 million in ARP funds to address lead in paint, there is still a need for additional funding. While the Legislature made great strides with the commitment to remove all lead service lines by 2031, you did not include any funding in the law to help with lead service line removal. New Jersey has yet to award ARP funds to aid the replacement of lead service lines since most of the ARP funds last year went to address combined sewage overflows. There is a need to address this issue holistically, **whole home remediation, focusing on lead-based paint, lead pipes, and soil remediation in low-to-moderate-income housing is crucial. children are free from lead poisoning and that our environment is lead-safe.**

¹NJ Health Department Lead Report Shows Increase in Screenings in Children Following COVID-19 Disruptions <https://www.nj.gov/health/news/2023/approved/20230412b.shtml>

I urge you to consider an appropriation of \$700 million from ARP funds for lead service line (LSL) replacement, with priority for low-income communities with a large number of LSLs. When combined with the \$379 million that NJ is projected to receive from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, there would be nearly \$1.2 billion in funding that would cover a half of the estimated total \$2.1 billion cost of LSL replacement.

This is an important request that demands your support and action for our children and residents alike.

Thank you for your consideration

Yvette Jordan,