



To: New Jersey Department of Health - BudgetFeedbackFY2027@doh.nj.gov  
Date: 11/5/2025

Dear Commissioner Brown and New Jersey Department of Health staff,

We applaud the New Jersey Department of Health's commitment to childhood lead poisoning prevention and the Department of Health's efforts to collaborate with other state agencies, such as the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Lead exposure remains a serious hazard for children in New Jersey. Reporting from your department shows that there are children in every NJ county with harmful levels of lead in their bodies, nearly 3,000 children in the state per year. The number of children exposed to alarming levels of lead is likely much higher since only 38.9% of children under age 26 months received a test at all in state fiscal year 2022<sup>1</sup>. However, these statistics are over three years old – from 2022, but they are the most recent data publicly available. **We urge you to release updated Annual Childhood Lead Reports for 2023 and 2024, dedicating budget resources if necessary.**

To improve the rate of blood lead level testing for children, and to provide higher quality lead case management, we urge you to take the following action:

- **Work with the NJ Department of Human Services and NJ FamilyCare to increase healthcare provider reimbursement for in-office childhood lead testing.** Labcorp reports that in the second half of 2023, approximately 30% of patients 2 years of age or younger in NJ had a lead screening order unfilled. We've heard from parents that traveling to a second location to complete lead testing creates financial and logistical barriers that deter test completion. Working alongside Isles and NJ American Academy of Pediatrics (NJAAP), we believe increasing reimbursement for lead screening performed in-office is the most direct way to increase screening. NJAAP partners have explained that payment for services by Medicaid HMOs, sometimes as low as \$2 a test, is a significant barrier for doctors to offer in-office lead screening. Let's make the reimbursement amount higher and transparent among plans. We would be pleased to work together with you on this challenge.
- **Restore funding for local health departments' childhood lead programs at prior SFY2025 levels.** The FY26 state budget reduced Maternal, Child and Chronic Health Services by 10%, impacting the Childhood Lead Program at a time when the department's lowering of the blood lead reference value from 5 to 3.5 µg/dL increased the case management load of local health departments. Local health departments require additional funding to effectively manage childhood lead cases.
- **Encourage and fund innovative partnerships and lead screening initiatives.** To improve access to services and to build resiliency during a time when federal funding is uncertain, local health departments should partner with community nonprofits and partners to offer lead screening at convenient locations and times. The NJ Department of Health Biomonitoring program has been a great partner to community organizations working on lead exposure

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/health/childhood-lead/documents/childhoodcontinue-lead-2022-annual-report.pdf>

prevention. **We urge you to continue funding to support the project of the Biomonitoring program's mobile blood lead level testing.** Doing so will create greater access to blood lead level testing for children and pregnant people in the communities most at risk of lead exposure.

- **Use lead abatement certification fees for lead poisoning prevention.** In the FY26 budget, lead abatement certification fees were used for the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner<sup>2</sup>. These fees should instead be used for lead poisoning prevention efforts. **We urge the NJDOH to direct lead abatement certificate fees to the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund** so homes with lead paint can be safely remediated.
- **Continue and enhance collaboration with the NJ Department of Community Affairs.** Local health departments should coordinate with Lead Paint Remediation and Abatement Program agencies by providing agency contact information to families, sharing notices of violations for abatement cases with the agencies, and maintaining close communication. Also, NJDOH can support tracking of lead-safe housing certificates for Section 8 housing.

**We also urge funding for more research on how childhood lead exposure affects the adult body, especially for pregnant people.** While NJ state law requires blood lead level testing for children, testing is not currently required for pregnant women. However, lead exposure is a risk for pregnant individuals, harming both the mother and child. State legislation A4848/S3616 was introduced “to require health care professionals to perform lead screening on pregnant persons under certain circumstances.” **We urge the inclusion of funding in the SY27 budget that supports blood lead level testing of pregnant women and the development of clinical guidance for health care providers to test pregnant persons twice during pregnancy.** Additionally, we encourage support from the NJDOH in promoting and implementing the [Protect, Prevent, Nurture campaign](#) to protect pregnant individuals and their babies from harmful environmental exposures.

We request that funding allocations prioritize the areas in NJ with the highest childhood elevated blood lead levels.

Adequate and sustained funding for blood lead level testing is an essential investment in the future of New Jersey’s children. We must take further action to ensure that lead exposure, which is entirely preventable, does not compromise the health of New Jersey residents.

Sincerely,

Sheila Caldwell, School Nurse, Lead-Free NJ Health Committee Co-Chair  
Elyse Pivnick, Isles, Lead-Free NJ Health Committee Co-Chair

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<sup>2</sup> [https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/publications/budget/governors-budget/2026/doh\\_analysis\\_2026.pdf](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/publications/budget/governors-budget/2026/doh_analysis_2026.pdf)