

## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 180848, **Version:** 0

---

Urging the Federal government to strengthen standards used to analyze dust-lead hazards and lead exposure to children.

WHEREAS, The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concluded that lead poisoning is the number one environmental health threat in the United States for children ages six and younger. The dangers of lead poisoning have been the source of public concern and government action throughout American history. In 1786, Philadelphia's own Benjamin Franklin wrote a series of correspondences detailing his observations of lead and lead poisoning around the world. Since then, countless advocates, community groups, individuals and elected and appointed officials have worked to reduce the harm caused by lead poisoning; and

WHEREAS, Scientific research allows our current government to more fully understand the danger lead poisoning poses to children and adults. According to the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), lead exposure can affect nearly every system in the body, produces no obvious symptoms, and frequently goes unrecognized, potentially leading to serious health issues. The Center for Disease Control has affirmed that there is no known identified safe blood lead level for human consumption. Lead poisoning is particularly dangerous for infants and young children; and

WHEREAS, The CDC has documented some of the serious health issues that impact children based on lead poisoning. Lead exposure "can seriously harm a child's health, increasing risks for damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development, learning and behavior problems (including reduced IQ, ADHD, juvenile delinquency, and criminal behavior), and hearing and speech problems." Toxic lead can cause adverse effects on the central nervous system as well as the kidney and hematopoietic systems. Very severe lead exposure in children can cause coma, convulsions, and even death; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphians from every corner of the City continue to tackle the issue of lead poisoning in Philadelphia's children. The CDC has found that populations at higher risk for lead exposure include the poor, members of racial-ethnic minority groups, recent immigrants, and persons living in older, poorly maintained rental properties. According to the Department of Public Health, "certain areas of the City - particularly North Philadelphia and some parts of West and Southwest Philadelphia - experience higher rates than the rest of the city." In some zip codes in the city, over 8% of children tested report elevated blood lead levels; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2017 Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance Report issued by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, 2,615 children in the City of Philadelphia have elevated blood lead levels. This number does not capture the full scope of lead poisoning in Philadelphia's children as the City of Philadelphia does not require every child to be tested for lead. The report indicates that only 76% of children aged two and under were tested for lead at least once in the last year of data collection; and

WHEREAS, The Surveillance Report also concludes that the leading cause of lead poisoning in the City of Philadelphia is ingestion of lead paint, which was used in properties built before 1978. A report commissioned by the Pennsylvania Apartment Association and the Real Estate Coalition estimates that 175,000 rental housing units in the City of Philadelphia are not currently required to be tested for lead. The report further states that

over 115,000 of these units contain lead-based paint and over 78,000 have a significant enough lead-based paint hazard that they would fail a lead-safe certification test; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Government announced in June 2018 its intention to strengthen lead-dust hazard standards for floors and window sills in light of science indicating “human health effects at lower blood lead levels than previously analyzed.” According to the EPA, “lead-contaminated dust from chipped and peeling lead-based paint is one of the most common causes of elevated blood lead levels in children.” The rule is now pending public comment. Although the EPA has conceded the development of new science on lead, it has not issued updated standards for the model used to estimate lead exposure risk to children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby urge the Federal government to strengthen standards used to analyze dust-lead hazards and lead exposure to children.