



**BALTIMORE
HOUSING**

STEPHANIE
RAWLINGS-BLAKE
Mayor

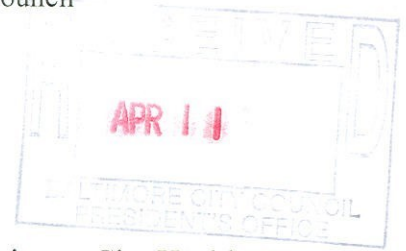
PAUL T. GRAZIANO
Executive Director, HABC
Commissioner, HCD

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Karen Randle, *Executive Secretary*

From: Paul T. Graziano, Commissioner

Date: April 8, 2011

Re: **Council Bill 11 – 0265R – Informational Hearing** – Baltimore City Health
Department – Loss of Federal Lead Paint Abatement Funding



Thank you for inviting the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to provide information for the council's upcoming hearing on lead paint abatement in Baltimore City. Starting April 1, 2011 the responsibility for managing the City's lead abatement program shifted from the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) to HCD, and in particular, HCD's Division of Green, Healthy, and Sustainable Homes.

The transfer of the lead abatement program from health to housing was contemplated before the loss of federal funding in interagency meetings where the coordination of green and healthy service programs was discussed. It makes sense for programs that involve housing improvements for health, safety, energy efficiency, sustainable homeownership, and affordable housing to be coordinated in one agency. HCD welcomes and embraces the transfer of the lead abatement program for that reason.

HCD's management of the lead abatement program will be focused on four primary goals:

- To provide the optimal protection of children at risk of lead paint poisoning by making homes lead safe or lead free
- To manage the lead abatement program, using state and local funding, in ways that will re-establish Baltimore's best opportunities to restore federal funding
- To coordinate the lead abatement program with other City services, especially those with the Baltimore City Health Department and HCD
- To coordinate the lead abatement program with non-profit organizations such as the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning

In the short-term, the lead abatement program will be continued with State capital funds and local Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) operating funds. Baltimore City's portion of State capital funding dedicated to lead abatement has traditionally exceeded one million dollars per year and the State expects that funding stream to continue. Federal funding is needed for the City to operate the program on a larger scale



Comments

and to reach greater economies of scale. HCD will aggressively pursue opportunities to restore multi-year federal funding for lead abatement.

In preparing for the program transfer, HCD and BCHD officials have already met with State and federal agencies. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development has re-examined its program criteria to make lead abatement more practical and feasible with only state and local funding. The State has raised the upper limit of funding per housing unit from \$15,000 to \$25,000, for example. Fees that families had to pay in the past, and which presented obstacles to accessing services, can now be incorporated into state support for capital expenses and program administration.

Federal officials from HUD met with HCD and BCHD on March 15, 2011 in a very positive and forward thinking meeting. While recognizing that there were production issues and other issues in the past, the meeting largely focused on plans for the future. HUD offered the City technical assistance in reforming the lead abatement program as part of HCD, and HCD has already been tapping that assistance. The City will be eligible to apply for new federal funding when the next round of applications are announced, which may come within the next 30 to 60 days.

As part of HCD, the lead abatement program will benefit from close coordination with the Office of Rehabilitation Services, the Weatherization Assistance Program, LIGHT (Leading Innovation for a Green and Healthier Tomorrow) projects, and HCD code enforcement. The core staff of the lead abatement program, five employees, will be supported by complementary staff in other sections of the division. The State has especially pledged support for coordinating services to households that need both lead abatement and weatherization services. The Abell Foundation is funding a position as Rental Coordinator to help work with landlords and tenants who are candidates for both services. An agreement with Constellation Energy Group is nearing completion that will provide one million dollars to support roof repairs, heating system replacements and case coordination for households needing green and healthy home improvements. Families needing lead abatement services will be prime candidates for that complementary program.

The future of lead abatement in Baltimore City will be a collaborative approach by both HCD and BCHD. Together, the agencies will examine prior and current cases where children have been reported with elevated blood levels or where lead paint hazards are present in households with children under six years old. The agencies will work together to overcome obstacles to families participating in the lead abatement program as homeowners or renters. The agencies have committed to weekly coordination meetings for that express purpose. Working together, HCD is confident that the City's record of reducing the incidence of childhood lead poisoning will continue until all children are safe from the lingering health hazards of lead paint in their homes.

cc: Ms. Angela Gibson, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*

Ms. Kaliope Parthemous, *Deputy Mayor*