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	Subject	Council Bill 13-00100R – In Support of State Action – Reduction in Lead Risk in Housing		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

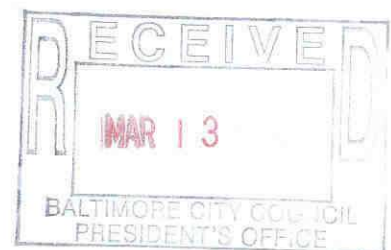
March 13, 2013

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill 13-0097R – In Support of State Action – Reduction in Lead Risk in Housing. The purpose of this bill is to support adoption of House Bill 1067, or similar legislation, to align Maryland lead poisoning prevention policies with CDC recommendations, and urging the Health Department and the Department of Housing and Community Development to improve their coordination in order to maximize the effectiveness of both current lead poisoning prevention efforts and the improvement of efforts that passage of House Bill 1067 would allow.

Maryland House Bill 1067 (HB 1067) seeks to alter the elevated blood lead level, lowering it from 10 µg/dl to 5 µg/dl wherein an owner of affected property is required to satisfy the modified risk reduction standard, and at which time a local health department is required to notify specified persons.

The BCHD supports HB 1067 because it aligns the State with the revised guidelines for childhood lead poisoning from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that were issued in May 2012. These guidelines lowered the recommended blood lead level at which known adverse health effects occur to a blood lead concentration of ≥ 5 µg/dl. This was done in response to an Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (ACCLPP) review of the science of childhood lead poisoning and the increasing body of studies providing evidence that impaired cognition, lowered IQ, and behavioral problems can occur at levels lower than the previous CDC “level of concern” of ≥ 10 µg/dl.

By requiring the owner of residential rental properties with children that have blood lead levels between 5-9 µg/dl to make repairs and mitigate lead poisoning hazards before a child’s lead level increases, HB 1067 provides a unique opportunity to avoid the potential for more serious adverse health effects that might occur if such repairs were not undertaken. And while great strides have been made in Maryland to reduce the incidence of lead exposure, in 2011, Baltimore City had a higher number of newly identified cases of lead poisoning (182 vs. 160) and a higher rate of elevated blood lead levels (258 vs. 194) than all other counties in Maryland combined.



In October of 2012, in response to the CDC's recommendations, and to support Housing's Lead Hazard Reduction Program, BCHD, made the decision to begin offering environmental investigations to families with children who had been identified as having a blood lead level in the lower range. This was done in advance of any CDC guidance on case management at lower blood lead levels and was intended, in part, to help the program gauge capacity and resources for public health intervention in these cases.

Augmenting an existing referral process, BCHD and Housing entered into a Memorandum of Understanding whereby Housing would provide funding to BCHD to offer educational home visits and referrals to Housing's Lead Hazard Reduction Program. In this way, lead hazard reduction services could be offered to more families, in particular those with children who had not yet experienced the more devastating effects of a higher elevated blood lead level. The environmental visit would identify the source of the exposure and the home visit would provide important information about preventing any increase in exposure. This proactive step by Baltimore City makes it one of only two jurisdictions in the state whose health agencies are offering such visits for those testing in the 5-9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ range. In addition, CitiStat has set up special sessions of "Lead Stat" to further track, monitor and coordinate this joint effort.

CDC's recognition of the irrevocable harm that can be caused to a child at even a low lead level was an important step in the fight to end childhood lead poisoning. Passage of HB 1067, the continued cooperation and pooling of resources of City agencies along with the advocacy and initiatives of groups like the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, all serve to act on that recommendation in a meaningful way and take us many steps closer to the goal of eradicating childhood lead poisoning.

BCHD supports this legislation and appreciates the opportunity to discuss this important issue. We will be present at the hearing to answer any questions the Council may have on this matter.

cc: Angela Gibson, Office of the Mayor
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