

Health Department

April 6, 2017

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE - HR C
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 871- Lead-Based Paint in Demolitions

Chair Dembrow and members of the committee, I am Dr. Jae Douglas, Environmental Health Director with the Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of Senate Bill 871 and the health protections it provides communities currently vulnerable to adverse health impacts from demolitions of older structures containing lead-based paint.

As the home for both a county-wide and statewide lead poisoning information and resource line, our office receives hundreds of calls every year from concerned citizens with questions and fears about the impacts of lead on their health. Many calls and emails we have received over the last two years are from community members fearful about residential demolition projects in older homes in their close urban neighborhoods. In this period of exceptional housing pressure in our county, the City of Portland alone has seen over 480 demolitions of pre-1970 single family homes since the start of 2015.¹ As we clear a path forward for sustainable growth in our cities and counties, we cannot afford to do so at the cost of healthy families and healthy communities.

The dangers of the heavy metal lead are well known and understood.² The ancient Roman civil engineer Vitruvius knew lead was harmful and wrote of the poor health and appearance of those working with lead.^{3 4} Ben Franklin wrote in 1786 of the “baneful particles and qualities” of lead.⁵ And yet, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 500,000 children in the US have blood lead levels at or

¹ Wood S.(2017) Personal communication March 22, 2017

² Needleman, H. Lead Poisoning. *Annual Review of Medicine*. 2004;55, 209-222

³ Lead Poisoning and Rome. *Encyclopaedia Romana*.

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/wine/leadpoisoning.html. Accessed April 7, 2017.

⁴ Vitruvius Pollio., & Morgan, M. H. *Vitruvius : The ten books on architecture*. New York: Dover Publications; 1960.

⁵ The Famous Benjamin Franklin Letter On Lead Poisoning. Environmental Education Associates.

[http://environmentaleducation.com/wp-content/uploads/userfiles/Ben%20Franklin%20Letter%20on%20EEA\(1\).pdf](http://environmentaleducation.com/wp-content/uploads/userfiles/Ben%20Franklin%20Letter%20on%20EEA(1).pdf). Accessed April 7, 2017.

above the CDC's current public health action level.⁶ Lead-based paint in older homes is the leading cause of childhood lead poisoning in the nation.⁷ There is no safe level of lead in our blood and the neuro-cognitive impacts of even low level exposures are well documented.⁸ Recent studies show that mechanical demolition of lead-paint containing structures can disperse lead dust as far as 300 feet from the worksite^{9 10} and yet there are no rules in Oregon requiring demolition contractors to take steps to control and contain the release of fugitive dust from demolition projects. For the hundreds of callers to the lead poisoning prevention program who are frightened and worried for the safety and health of their children and themselves, we have no answer other than to educate them about the *absence* of protections and to offer tips like covering garden beds with plastic and closing windows. This is unacceptable and must change. Requiring demolition contractors to develop *and follow* a plan to prevent fugitive dust during demolitions will help protect workers, families, and neighborhoods from this well known poison.

Multnomah County Health supports Senate bill 871 because it provides a measure of protection for public health where none currently exists. The evidence that demolitions spread lead-containing dust into our neighborhoods demands action, and requiring best practices for dust containment on these projects is common-sense public health protection.

It is our job at Multnomah County Health Department to protect and promote the health of our community: We need to assure that individuals, families and communities gain greater control over the factors that influence their health. As Environmental Health Director for Multnomah County Health Department, I am proud to stand with the advocates on this important legislation. It is all of our responsibility to create a healthier Oregon for future generations.

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Multnomah County Health Department

⁶Raymond J, Brown MJ. Childhood Blood Lead Levels in Children Aged <5 Years — United States, 2009–2014. *MMWR Surveill Summ* 2017;66(No. SS-3), 1–10.

⁷ Lanphear BP, Matte TD, Rogers J, et al. The Contribution of Lead-Contaminated House Dust and Residential Soil to Children's Blood Lead Levels. *Environmental Research* 1998;79(1), 51-68.

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Preventing Lead Poisoning in Young Children*. Atlanta: CDC; 2005.

⁹ Jacobs DE, Cali S, Welch A, et al. Lead and Other Heavy Metals in Dust Fall from Single-Family Housing Demolition. *Public Health Reports*. 2013;128, 454-462.

¹⁰ Farfel MR, Orlova AO, Lees PS, et al. A Study of Urban Housing Demolition as a Source of Lead in Ambient Dust on Sidewalks, Streets, and Alleys. *Environmental Research*. 2005;99(2), 204-213.