

Health Department

February 2, 2021

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE - Remote F
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2077 - Lead-based paint activities. Amends ORS 431A.355.

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Hayden, Salinas, and members of the Committee, my name is Perry Cabot and I am the Senior Program Specialist overseeing the Lead Poisoning Prevention program for the Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2077.

It is our job at the Multnomah County Health Department to protect community members' health, and this includes the protection of the most vulnerable members of our community from the permanent damages associated with lead poisoning. According to the CDC, "Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust are the most widespread and hazardous sources of lead exposure for young children in the United States." (CDC, 2020)¹ Despite the passage of federal and state rules in 2010 that require certification for contractors and others working on pre-1978 housing, achieving the levels of compliance and enforcement necessary to help eradicate lead poisoning from these sources remains an elusive goal.

When we talk about lead poisoning prevention, the gold standard is primary prevention - preventing lead poisoning before it has a chance to happen. According to the CDC, "primary prevention - the removal of lead hazards from the environment before a child is exposed - is the most effective way to ensure that children do not experience harmful long-term effects of lead exposure" (CDC, 2020).² In light of this, it is particularly frustrating when the very agencies tasked with the enforcement of these rules can cite violators for not following these well established rules, yet lack the authority to ensure that the public health hazards created by these violations are cleaned up.

The current statutory authority of the Oregon Health Authority to address lead-based paint hazards created during renovation projects is non-existent. The changes to the statute in this bill stand to provide real protections for vulnerable communities by

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources/paint.htm>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm>

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establishing requirements for the assessment and remediation of lead-based paint hazards in properties occupied by these vulnerable members of our community. Low-income renters and renters who are Black, indigenous, or other people of color (BIPOC) bear a disproportionate economic and public health burden in housing and will benefit from these increased protections.

Passage of HB 2077 will better equip the Oregon Health Authority with the primary prevention tools needed to prevent poisonings from lead-based paint hazards in and around rental housing, including housing occupied by families with small children and other vulnerable populations. Those individuals calling the Lead Poisoning Prevention program or a local tenant's rights organization to report lead hazards around their rental housing would be better served by the proposed change.

In a typical year in Multnomah County, we investigate 50 confirmed cases of lead poisoning in children. Each one of these kids has been put at risk of irreversible neurological damage, impacting their entire life course. We can do a better job protecting them if OHA has more tools. We support these amendments to the statute for the simple reason that they are crafted with the intention of preventing lead poisonings in the communities we serve.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify today. Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Perry Cabot
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