



To: House Health Policy Committee Members
From: Tina Wahl (Reynolds), Environmental Health Program Director
Date: Dec. 9, 2021
Re: Testimony on House Lead Bill Package, HBs 5413-5421 and HB 5423

Thank you, Chair Kahle, Majority Vice Chair Meerman, Minority Vice Chair Witwer, and members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify on HBs 5413-5421 and HB 5423. Today's hearing represents the first discussion of a comprehensive bipartisan lead bill package in more than a decade. I applaud this committee for moving beyond discussion and into action to address barriers and increase protections for our most vulnerable children.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has found that there is no safe level of lead. Lead is a potent neurotoxin that reduces IQ, hampers impulse control, reduces attention spans, and as a result, impedes learning, productivity, and lifetime earnings. New research is linking lead exposure to long-term chronic health conditions as well like dementia, cardiovascular impacts, high blood pressure, kidney damage, and hearing loss. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable, and the bills before you today work in unison to protect children from needless exposures.

This important bill package would modernize our lead poisoning prevention definitions to protect kids and meet applicable federal standards. One definitional change, among others, will reflect the CDC's recent lowering of the blood lead reference level from 5 to 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (ug/dl). As a result, 1,200 additional children would be eligible for support and services under the new lower blood lead threshold.

As our lead testing rates plunged to 14% this past year, a bill in this package would redouble efforts to educate physicians about the need to test for this otherwise silent exposure. Another bill works to empower parents by giving them knowledge, before they take occupancy, of lead hazards in their new homes. There are also stepped-up protections for families that hire a contractor to do work in their home and an assurance that the work will be done in a lead-safe manner.

Michigan Environmental Council strongly supports the effort to modernize our public health code, strengthen protections for families against lead exposure, educate our caregivers, and, most importantly, focus on primary prevention so no more Michigan children will suffer the effects of a lead exposure.

While there remains more work to be done on this pernicious problem, these bills are a solid down payment and a real sign of progress that this committee and the public can be proud of. Thank you again for your consideration of these bills, and I stand ready to support and assist this committee in any way that I can be of service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Wahl". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Wahl".

Tina Wahl (Reynolds)