



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE March 14, 2007

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### **Senate Bill 683 - An Act Concerning Early Childhood Lead Poisoning**

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The Department of Public Health provides the following information concerning Senate Bill 683.

The Department supports that portion of legislation that would implement key elements of the DPH Plan to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning in Connecticut by 2010 and to achieve the Healthy People 2010 objective of eliminating childhood lead poisoning.

Childhood lead poisoning is one of the most common, yet most preventable, pediatric health problems in Connecticut today. Lead poisoning can strike any child, regardless of nationality, race, geographic location, or economic status. Any amount of lead in the body is unsafe and can cause permanent damage to a child's health.

Lead is absorbed into a child's bloodstream by swallowing or inhaling lead contaminated dust or materials. Lead can damage the brain or nervous system, interfere with growth, cause hearing loss, and produce learning disabilities among other negative health and behavioral impacts. Many children do not show signs of lead poisoning until they are very severely poisoned, but signs may include vomiting, upset stomach, irritability, and restlessness.

Some potential ways to reduce childhood lead poisoning in Connecticut are:

- **Mandatory universal blood lead screening of young children.** This would improve blood lead screening rates in our most vulnerable at-risk population and identify all children who have been exposed to lead. Identification of these children will allow Local Health Departments to investigate, identify sources of lead exposure, and initiate action to eliminate these lead hazards. A blood test is the only way to determine if someone has been lead poisoned. There is a potential when utilizing universal screening that some children may not test positive for lead or may test below the CDC's identified toxic level for blood lead poisoning.
- **Lower the blood lead level threshold for mandatory epidemiological investigation and lead inspection.**
- **Expand the use of lead safe work practices to reduce lead-based paint hazards.**

Lead-based paint hazards remain the primary source of lead exposure for children and CT has an aging housing stock that contains a significant amount of lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards. Lead-based paint hazards must be effectively eliminated if Connecticut is to successfully address childhood lead poisoning.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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