



# Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

**Testimony of Merrill Gay in favor of HB 5403**  
***AN ACT CREATING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LEAD ABATEMENT.***  
Banking Committee  
March 6th , 2018

Senators Winfield and Martin, Representative Lesser, and members of the Committee: My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of over a hundred organizations ranging from individual childcare programs to statewide research and advocacy organizations. We represent a wide range of organizations that care for, and about, our youngest children.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 5403 “**An Act Creating A Task Force to Study Lead Abatement.**” The most recent Department of Public Health Annual Lead Surveillance Report (2015 data) tells us that using the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) standard of a blood lead level >5 ug/dL, there were 2,156 children who were lead poisoned. More troubling, is that 1,432 of those children were under three of age. The very time when the brain is developing fastest and when lead poisoning can have the greatest lasting impact.

There are a number of communities where more than 5% of children have been lead poisoned: . Ansonia (5.4%), Canaan (8.3%), Eastford (5.6%), New Haven (7.6%), North Canaan (12%), Norwich (5.6%), Plainfield (5.2%), Salisbury (6.3%), Sharon (6.7%), Stafford (5.4%), Sterling (5.2%), Torrington (5.1%), Washington (5.1%), Waterbury (6.7%).

However, the most troubling piece of date in the report was that **only 80 properties were abated in 2015.** Clearly we need to ramp up lead abatement work. Otherwise more children are going to move into those same lead contaminated apartments and get poisoned too. Since 2015, good work has started. The Connecticut Children Medical Center is using federal HUD funds to abate properties in 15 communities. But clearly more needs to be done. A taskforce to study the issue and make recommendations back to this committee is a great start. In addition to the strategies for study laid out in the bill, I would also suggest that

the taskforce be charged with examining ways to maximize federal funds to pay for abatement. Our neighbor next door, Rhode Island uses federal Medicaid funds<sup>1</sup> to pay for abatement and a number of states including Ohio and Michigan have tapped into the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to fund abatement<sup>2</sup>.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that our youngest children have a healthy and bright future here in Connecticut.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/Lead\\_RI\\_final.pdf](http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/Lead_RI_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SHVS-Manatt-Leveraging-CHIP-to-Protect-Low-Income-Children-from-Lead-January-2017.pdf>