



PRESS CONFERENCE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**CLEVELAND LEAD ADVOCATES FOR SAFE HOUSING RELEASE
“LEAD SAFE” INITIATIVE PETITION PROPOSAL. CALLS ON CITY COUNCIL TO PASS AS
AN ORDINANCE OR IT WILL GO TO VOTERS IN NOVEMBER 2019**

Cleveland, OH -- Cleveland Lead Advocates for Safe Housing (CLASH) released today their proposed ballot initiative to require that all city rental properties be tested for lead hazards and be certified as “lead safe.” If Cleveland City Council declines to pass the proposed ordinance, its passage will be sought this November through the process outlined in Chapter 7 of the City of Cleveland Charter requiring 5,000 signatures and a public vote.

In recent years, members of CLASH have spoken with experts on the rental housing market in Cleveland, health professionals, legislators who passed lead initiatives in other cities, and law professors who worked on health policy and lead legislation. Based on these extensive conversations CLASH members have concluded that, in order to respond to the lead crisis, the City Council and Mayor must (1) implement a legislative requirement that all rental properties are tested for lead hazards and be “lead safe,” (2) identify and secure significant funding via a partnership with the private sector to assist landlords to make their properties safe from lead and (3) ensure tenant protections are provided.

“On average 4 children are testing positive for elevated blood lead levels every day,” says Yvonka Hall, CLASH member and Director of Outreach for the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus. “Already 48 children have been poisoned since the City’s recent renewed commitment to addressing lead hazards. It’s time for action. CLASH will move forward with the ballot initiative process, but we can save days and save lives if City Council takes up the proposed bill themselves.”

The proposed ballot initiative is similar to Proposed Ordinance 990-17, which was introduced in City Council in 2017 by then-Councilman Jeff Johnson, with the support of local lead advocacy groups, but it never received a full committee hearing. As with 990-17, the proposed ballot initiative requires landlords to use a lead risk assessment to prove that their rental properties are “lead safe.”

“The mechanics of the proposal have been updated to integrate the mandatory lead safe standard into the City’s rental registry program and the Healthy Homes initiative,” said Rebecca Maurer, an attorney who helped to update the bill’s language. “We wanted to build off of the momentum the City has already built in these programs. Moreover, the proposed bill is crafted to increase tenant protections and decrease the risk of displacement.”

CLASH believes the citizens of Cleveland have waited long enough for real solutions to be implemented by the City’s political and civic leaders. “The time to act is now. We cannot continue to wait. There is no need for more commissions and conferences to do what we already know needs to be done. The children of Cleveland need us all to work together and take the action necessary to make their homes safe from lead. It is time to end this crisis,” said Jeff Johnson, CLASH member.

ABOUT CLEVELAND LEAD ADVOCATES FOR SAFE HOUSING

Cleveland Lead Advocates for Safe Housing (CLASH) is dedicated to protecting the most vulnerable citizens in the City of Cleveland. Member organizations include the Cleveland Lead Safe Network, Single Payer Access Network, Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus, Black Lives Matter of Cuyahoga County, Cleveland End Poverty Now Coalition, Organize!Ohio, and the Cleveland Democratic Socialists of America.

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