



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Legislators Call on Governor Walker to do More to Combat Childhood Lead Poisoning

MADISON – After repeated correspondence with the Department of Health Services (DHS), Governor Walker included an update to Wisconsin state statute in his proposed budget, reflecting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations regarding the definition of lead poisoning. Wisconsin’s definitions of “lead poisoning” and “lead exposure” are dangerously out-of-date and currently allow double the lead poisoning as the federal standard before triggering remediation.

“While I am heartened that Governor Walker is finally updating Wisconsin’s outdated lead poisoning standards, we have much more work to do in protecting Wisconsin’s children from the devastating consequences of lead poisoning, which in many communities throughout Wisconsin exceeds the percentage of kids poisoned in Flint, Michigan,” said Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison).

Both urban and rural communities struggle with childhood lead poisoning. In Flint, 4.9% of children were lead poisoned. Comparatively, Milwaukee has a rate of 8.6%, Watertown has a rate of 8.4%, Buffalo County has a rate of 7.3% and Sheboygan County has a rate of 6.3%.

“Adjusting our state’s standards to reflect the best available medical evidence from the CDC is a good step; however, we must make sure that state officials follow through and investigate the source of these lead exposures, so that we can prevent other children from falling victim to this terrible toxin,” said Sen. Johnson (D-Milwaukee).

Senator Johnson and Representative Taylor call on Governor Walker and Republican legislators to join them in initiatives to:

- Require lead testing and disclosure in rental properties;
- Include water testing in environmental assessments for lead-poisoned children;
- Require facilities serving children under 6 to test for lead and share results with parents;
- Establish a fund and a low-interest loan program to help with remediation costs;
- Direct DHS and DNR to apply for federal lead remediation funding.

Lead poisoning, especially in children under 6, causes a lifetime of health and behavioral issues, including reduced intelligence, learning disabilities, and developmental delays.