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## **ACTING SECRETARY OF HUMAN SERVICES, REP. STRUZZI HELP LAUNCH LEAD FREE PROMISE PROJECT, NON-PARTISAN COALITION TO END LEAD PAINT POISONING IN PA**

**CONTACT:** Kate Philips  
[philips@parkerphilips.com](mailto:philips@parkerphilips.com)  
215.850.4647 | mobile

**HARRISBURG, PA** (June 17, 2021) – The Lead Free Promise Project (LFPP) launched a non-partisan coalition advocacy campaign to end lead paint poisoning across Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Acting Secretary of the Department of Human Services Meg Snead and State Representative Jim Struzzi joined the 38 organizations leading the effort to combat lead paint poisoning to announce its goals to create a state fund for low-income homeowners and landlords to remove lead paint-based hazards in properties, and by the passage of legislation requiring all children under two-years-old to be screened for lead poisoning.

“Lead poisoning is still affecting thousands of children today and has a significant impact on their health and behavior,” said PA Acting Secretary of the Department of Human Services Meg Snead. “We must act now to ensure that no further families have to go through this heartbreaking issue.”

“Despite what many may think, lead poisoning remains a serious threat to children and families across the commonwealth,” said PA State Representative Jim Struzzi, (PA-62). “It is imperative that we do all we can to remediate the dangers of lead and help protect our future generations.”

Joining in the launch was Sandra Ortiz, a parent from Juniata County, who understands the danger and impact of lead paint poisoning.

“No family should ever have to watch their child suffer and go through this terrible poisoning,” said Ortiz. “We are the voice for these children, and it’s time our lawmakers listen and take action.”

The coalition launch comes on the heels of a report issued last week by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, showing children poisoned by lead paint are at greater risk for criminal behavior. The study found that lead exposure in childhood can lead to future learning disabilities, behavior issues, and problems with impulse control, which can lead to crime in adulthood.

“Childhood lead poisoning is preventable but far too prevalent across Pennsylvania,” Michelle Kott, Chief of Police, City of Bethlehem:

“Research is clear that childhood lead poisoning increases the risk of children engaging in later criminal behavior. Investing in childhood lead exposure testing and remediation of lead paint in homes will make our communities not only healthier, but also safer.”

The Lead Free Promise project, Co-Chaired by PCCY Health Policy Director, Colleen McCauley, RN, BSN, MPH and Franklin & Marshall College Assistant Professor of Biology & Public Health Harriet Okatch, Ph.D, MPH, is part of ThrivingPA.com, a non-partisan, statewide campaign seeking to improve the quality of and increase equitable access to a coordinated system of health supports, including access to comprehensive perinatal health services, children’s health insurance, nutrition supports and lead screening and abatement.

“We launched this coalition to shine a light on a preventable and extremely damaging risk harming thousands of PA children every year,” said Dr. Harriet Okatch. “A relatively small state investment could finally remove lead from homes, get children tested, and protect the future promise of our children.”

Every year the promise of thousands of young children in Pennsylvania is diminished due to lead paint poisoning. PA children are poisoned at a rate 2.3 times higher than children poisoned in Flint, Michigan at the peak of the city’s crisis. Approximately 8,000 PA children are poisoned every year, yet these are only the children we know about as only 20% of children are tested.

“Lead poisoning robs children of their potential,” said Dr. Frances Gross, Lancaster. “There’s no safe level of lead in a child’s body - and there’s no prescription I can write to treat babies who have been poisoned by lead – because the order I really need to write is for deteriorated lead-based paint to be removed from their homes. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable, and we must do more to protect Pennsylvania’s babies.”

The Lead Free Promise Project launched its new website ([www.PAleadfree.org](http://www.PAleadfree.org)) today where parents, landlords and other organizations can join the coalition and learn more about lead paint exposure and local remediation resources.

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