



For Immediate Release

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New Jersey Acts to Protect Children from Lead Hazards
Isles Successfully Advocates for New Lead Paint Inspection Law

Trenton, NJ - Today, Governor Murphy signed S1147/A1372, a major step in our efforts to prevent childhood lead poisoning in New Jersey. This legislation, passed on June 24th, requires a proactive lead inspection process for rental properties built before 1978, closing a loophole that allowed all single family/two family rental units to go uninspected. Before today, thousands of kids were poisoned each year before lead was detected in a home – using kids as lead detectors. The new law will ensure that families know their home is lead-safe before they move in.

Governor Murphy signed the legislation today in Bloomfield, NJ.

Isles thanks the Governor’s office, as well as key legislators who drafted the legislation, especially Senators Ruiz, Cruz-Perez, and Turner, as well as Senators Sarlo, Singleton, Cunningham and Assemblymembers Holley, Wimberley, Benson, Mukherji, and Reynolds-Jackson.



“We are grateful for the support of Governor Murphy and his team, who are demonstrating their commitment to ending childhood lead poisoning,” says Isles’ CEO Sean Jackson. “Isles also appreciates the work and support of our partners, including the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, Advocates for Children of NJ, New Jersey Future, Lead Free New Jersey, Environment NJ, New Jersey Policy Perspective, Lead Safe Cleveland, and the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning (Rochester, NY).”

Isles has been at the forefront of advocating for common sense policies to keep kids safe from lead and other environmental health hazards for decades. “We know this is one of the most impactful ways to prevent childhood lead poisoning over the long term,” says Jackson. “Today, the New Jersey legislature stops the usage of children as the canary in the coal mine.”

“The vast majority of the nearly 4,000 new childhood lead poisoning cases each year in New Jersey are caused by lead-based paint that deteriorates and turns to dust in the home. Most families do not discover they have a lead paint poisoning problem until their child tests positive for an elevated blood lead level. COVID and the related stay-at-home orders exacerbated this problem,” says Ben Haygood,

Isles' Environmental Health Policy Director. "This legislation creates a 'primary prevention' system -- identifying and addressing lead hazards in homes before children get poisoned."

In states and cities where similar policies have been implemented, childhood lead poisoning from lead-based paint has plummeted. In Rochester, for example, after requiring a lead safe certificate for all rental housing, lead poisoning of children dropped nearly 90% over 10 years. Maryland has reduced lead poisoning in Baltimore by 99%; Rhode Island and Massachusetts have had similar outcomes.

No Safe Lead Levels

Lead is a dangerous neurotoxin that affects a child's learning, memory, and even behavior, as it damages the part of the brain that controls impulse.



"There is no such thing as a 'safe' level of lead," says Elyse Pivnick, Isles' Senior Director of Environmental Health. "Children with even low levels of lead are six times more likely to enter the juvenile justice system, thirty percent more likely to fail 3rd grade reading and math, and seven times more likely to drop out of school. Tragically, in 2015, 13 municipalities in New Jersey had a higher percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels than Flint, MI."

The costs and impacts of allowing the persistence of lead in paint and water affects all New Jerseyans. The costs associated with lead poisoning are immense -- more than \$62 million annually for NJ taxpayers. Lead poisoning drives higher special education costs, higher levels of juvenile crime and incarceration, increased high school dropouts, higher rates of unemployment, and a variety of health problems that lead to earlier retirement, enrollment in Medicaid, and even death. New studies have shown the long-term effects of lead exposure on heart and kidney disease and neurological issues for seniors, as well.

Isles' Leadership on Lead Poisoning Prevention

Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization based in the Trenton, New Jersey region with a mission to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities. Since 1999, Isles has been engaged in environmental health and policy work from many angles:

- **Comprehensive Service Delivery:** Isles developed the first project in NJ to reduce exposure to lead and other indoor hazards, creating energy efficiency, saving energy dollars, and creating comfortable homes for low income families. Trenton ReHEET (Residential Health, Energy and Environmental Transformation) provided comprehensive solutions to substandard housing, indoor health (lead, asthma, mold, safety) and energy efficiency needs of Trenton residents. ReHEET provided these services to more than 300 homes in Trenton.
- **Lead Remediation and Abatement:** Isles has completed more than 150 lead remediation and abatement projects since 2017, through a subgrant with the City of Trenton's HUD lead grant and through the State of NJ's Lead Safe Home Remediation Pilot. Isles is the only nonprofit organization certified as a Lead Abatement Contractor in the State of NJ.

- **Lead Testing and Healthy Homes Assessments:** Isles has performed more than 3,000 lead and environmental (healthy homes) assessments over the past 4 years using trained Community Health Workers.
- **Technical Assistance:** Isles has been a technical assistance provider to community development agencies participating in the DCA's Lead Safe Program for the past 2 years. In that time Isles has improved the efficiency of operations, increased the knowledge of agencies on proper lead work procedures, created statewide Cost Guidelines for lead work, and vetted/managed a pool of lead risk assessors for use by all agencies.
- **Training:** Isles provides lead training for lead workers and contractors for the EPA RRP certification and is a state certified trainer for professional lead credentials necessary for lead abatement work. More than 1,300 workers have received lead safe work credentials through Isles. In addition, as the NJ Center for Healthy Housing, Isles has provided environmental health training/workshops for home visitors (social workers, health workers, building inspectors, etc.) and community members for more than a decade. Isles has trained or facilitated the training of more than 1,300 professionals in the Healthy Homes for Community Health Worker course and our 8 Keys to a Healthy Home workshop.
- **Lead and Health Policy:** In 2016, Isles released a study of NJ childhood lead poisoning revealing that in 11 municipalities and two counties in New Jersey a higher percentage of children were identified with elevated levels of lead in their blood than children in Flint, Mich. Isles, with others, successfully advocated the State of NJ to make available \$10 million in funding to provide lead safe repairs and to lower the "level of concern" for lead blood levels in children from 10 ug/dl to the CDC's recommended 5 ug/dl. Since then an additional \$10 million was approved for lead hazard control across the State.



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SENATE BILL 1147

Lead based Paint Causes 75% of Childhood Lead Poisoning

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Lead in the *paint of NJ homes and apartments* causes the vast majority (70%-80%) of the more than **3,500 new childhood lead poisoning cases each year in New Jersey**. Between the years 2000 and 2015 over 225,000 children in New Jersey were identified with elevated blood lead levels.¹ As the lead paint deteriorates, lead *dust* spreads to floors, toys, counters, and window ledges, eventually making it to the mouths, lungs and brains of vulnerable children. Lead is a dangerous neurotoxin that affects a child's learning, memory, and even behavior, as it damages the part of the brain that controls impulse. Children with even low levels of lead are **six times more likely to enter the juvenile justice system, thirty percent more likely to fail 3rd grade reading and math, and seven times more likely to drop out of school.**² The NJ Department of the Public Advocate estimates future savings from avoiding lead exposures to be \$32,000 per child annually and \$27 billion statewide. Tragically, in 2015, 13 municipalities in New Jersey had a higher percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels than Flint, MI.³

We also know that, when sheltering in place (since the onset of Covid):

- Screening rates are down 40%
- There is a 27-29% uptick in children with an Elevated Blood Lead Level (EBLL)
- Hospitalizations for Lead poisoning are up (from 3 in 2019 to 11 in 2020)

One of the reasons that children continue to be poisoned by lead based paint, is that there is no statewide law that inspects the vast majority of our housing stock for lead. Currently, one- and two-family homes and apartments are not being inspected for lead at any time.

S1147 addresses these gaping loopholes in our policy to ensure that a family's home or apartment is safe from lead.

This bill requires a proactive inspection process for rental properties built before 1978, so that families can be sure their home is lead-safe before they move in and requires that landlords have an updated Lead Safe Certificate at rental turnover. Unless previously inspected, every single-family, two-family, and multiple rental dwelling will be inspected for lead-based paint hazards at rental turnover, or within two years of the effective date of the bill. Periodic follow-up inspections will be required as well. Seasonal rental units will be exempted.

Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization based in Trenton, New Jersey. With a mission to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities, we design and develop effective services that support this mission and share what we learn with others who can make a difference.

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¹ <https://toxicnj.com/why-does-lead-poisoning-still-afflict-tens-of-thousands-of-kids-in-nj-7dc4fae536a>

² https://economics.yale.edu/sites/default/files/aizer_feb_12_2015.pdf

³ https://www.nj.com/news/2016/02/11_cities_in_jersey_have_more_lead-affected_kids_t.html