



For Immediate Release
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New Jersey Commits Significant Funding to Remove Lead Paint from NJ Homes

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Legislature voted \$170M to remediate lead paint hazards in homes and apartments across the state as a part of the new State Budget that begins on July 1. Using federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), this is a significant step towards ending childhood lead poisoning in New Jersey and making all families “Lead-Safe @ Home”.

With initial disbursements to stand-up infrastructure, recommended workforce development initiatives, and other best practice for lead hazard control, this program is the beginning of the end for lead paint poisoning in New Jersey. Isles estimates that there are at least 250,000 housing units occupied by children with lead paint hazards. An additional \$300M in water infrastructure funding also advances New Jersey’s fight to replace lead contaminated water lines.

The NJ Department of Community Affairs will determine how to distribute the funds, but it is expected to train lead inspectors and contractors and provide funds to replace lead painted doors, windows, and wood trim in qualified homes and apartments. Creating new infrastructure, like Lead and Healthy homes Resource Centers, and lead training to quickly scale up our workforce, are needed to both successfully implement the new Lead Safe Certificate law, and to remediate thousands of New Jersey’s lead-burdened homes and apartments.

Isles applauds the leadership of Senate President Scutari and Speaker Coughlin, who partnered with Governor Murphy to create this \$170M fund for lead paint work. We salute the many members who spoke passionately from the floor in support of lead hazard clean ups.



“These dollars will make thousands of homes and apartments across our state lead-safe for our children and families,” said Sean Jackson, CEO of Isles, Inc. “We know making these homes safe reduces healthcare costs, improves educational performance, and helps our kids and family succeed. This is an investment that will pay off for our families – and our State.”

For decades, [Isles has been at the forefront](#) of advocating for common sense lead policies, removing lead paint from homes and training contractors, home visitors and others to keep kids safe from lead and other environmental health hazards.

“More than a dozen children are still being poisoned by lead *every day* in New Jersey, and according to the NJ Department of Health, dust from lead-based paint is responsible for at least 75% of those cases. This new funding provides a significant down payment in fulfilling the promise of ending childhood lead poisoning in New Jersey kids, forever,” said Ben Haygood, Isles’ Policy Director.

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.¹

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,” said 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.”²

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.³ 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.
- **Lead Remediation and Abatement:** Isles has completed more than 200 lead remediation and abatement projects since 2017. 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 in Trenton homes.
- **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.
- **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. In addition, 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.
- **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.

¹ <https://www.nj.gov/dca/news/news/2018/approved/20180308.html>

² https://www.nj.com/news/2016/02/11_cities_in_jersey_have_more_lead-affected_kids_t.html

³ [Lead Exposure and Racial Disparities in Test Scores, Anna Aizer, Janet Currie, Peter Simon, Patrick M. Vivier, Published 2015](#)