

Lee, Chris

From: Ann Batiza <annwisc@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 23, 2020 4:29 PM
To: Lee, Chris
Subject: LWV Request for \$3.55 million to Health Department to assess ALL homes of lead-poisoned children

Dear Mayor Barrett and Common Council Members,

Thank you for thoughtfully listening to the expressed desires of Milwaukee residents at the October 6 budget hearing, and to your subsequent consideration of those requests. During the hearing, as Vice-President for Organization for the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County (LWVMC), I described the League's support for the Coalition on Lead Emergency (COLE) request to provide the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) with the funds needed to assess the homes of *all* children projected to be lead-poisoned in 2021.

The Health Department has now told COLE that \$3.55 million dollars is required for 9 additional assessors, 4 public health nurses, 6 lab staff, managers and environmental coordinators, analysis machinery, and associated costs.

Based on the 2019 numbers below, 1860 children were identified as lead poisoned in Milwaukee in 2019 (at or above 5 micrograms of lead/deciliter of blood). But our Health Department has been able to assess the homes of only 140 children. This makes up only about 7% of those found to be lead-poisoned in 2019. (See the 115 children highlighted in yellow below; plus 25 more children identified by other criteria, not shown.)

That left 93% of those children without someone from the Health Department coming in to assess their homes for sources of lead.

*Venous highest blood lead test per child under 6 years ...

(headings added by COLE for clarification)

mcg/dl test results Number of individuals

| | | |
|---------------|------|---|
| 5 - 9.9 | 1368 | * |
| 10 - 14.9 | 271 | * |
| 15 - 19.9 | 106 | * |
| 20 - 39.9 | 101 | * |
| 40 or Greater | 14 | * |

*Data provided by Marivel Montejano, Director of Home Environmental Health Service, MHD

Besides providing home assessments, that contact from the MHD in 2021 will mean that parents will have a conversation about how they might treat lead-contaminated surfaces immediately, so as to protect their children from continuing lead exposure, even if professional abatement of the home lags.

In other words, \$3.55 million will give an additional 93% of affected children and their families in 2021 a chance to stop continued poisoning, using the state and CDC-recommended designation of lead poisoning (5mcg/dl) as the *new threshold for home assessment*.

Unfortunately using a threshold of 10 mcg/dl (by giving the MHD only \$1.6 million) will continue to leave more than 1300 children without home visits and assessments. They will most likely continue to be poisoned.

It is imperative that the city begin to reverse institutional racism that has allowed so many children of color to be poisoned, especially African-American children on the North side. In some census tracts on the North side, according to cumulative state DHS data from 2013 -2016, one in three children tested there was found to be lead poisoned. This is unacceptable.

Permanently removing lead from the environment is the ultimate way to protect these children. Assessing homes is a necessary first step to trigger both abatement and parental education.

I watched some of you discuss this issue for over an hour in committee after the October 6 hearing. Thank you for your thoughtful questions and consideration of this issue. Please allocate these funds for the Milwaukee Health Department to assess the homes of *ALL* children designated as lead poisoned in 2021.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County -

Best regards,
Ann Batiza

Ann Batiza Ph.D.
League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County, VP for Organization and Co-chair Natural Resources
Committee; LWVMC representative to COLE
200 S Water St. #205
Milwaukee, WI 53204
414-238-3903
District 12, Alderman Perez

