



The Massachusetts Chapter

June 6, 2017

To the Honorable Chairs and Members
Joint Committee on Revenue:

Re: H. 1626, An Act Relative to Lead Abatement

The Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) represents approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. MCAAP supports H. 1626, which would lower the lead poisoning level for children in Massachusetts to a level more in line with the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation and would incentivize property owners to de-lead through increased tax credits.

Lead causes a multitude of health and developmental problems, including lowered IQ, behavioral problems, sleep disorders, antisocial/violent behaviors, and brain damage. Although banned since 1978, lead paint remains in many Massachusetts homes, since almost all houses built before 1978 in the state contain lead paint. Because lead paint chips off painted surfaces, tastes good (sweet) and creates dust as it ages, the home is where the majority of children are exposed to and can unwittingly ingest lead, leading to lead poisoning. Children under the age of 6 years are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning because their brains are rapidly developing.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) note that there is no safe level of lead in the blood and have recommended 5 micrograms per deciliter, as its "blood lead level of concern". Current Massachusetts law, written decades ago, sets the lead poisoning level in the Commonwealth at 25 micrograms per deciliter 5 times higher than the CDC's recommended level. This has meant that renters, parents, medical and public health professionals could not require inspections, and deleading procedures be performed even in homes where children have been, and continue to be, lead poisoned. H.1626 would lower the lead poisoning action level at which inspections and deleading procedures would take place in Massachusetts to 10 micrograms per deciliter. This would still be twice the CDC recommended level but is far less than the antiquated current Massachusetts threshold.

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In order to provide incentives to property owners to provide safe housing for children, H1626 would double the tax credit for lead abatement from \$1,500 to \$ 3,000, and from \$500 to \$1,000 for lead abatement pursuant to an emergency lead management plan and letter of interim control. It would also increase monetary penalties for discriminatory housing practices.

Years ago, Massachusetts took the lead in lead policy, requiring lead remediation 7 years before the rest of the nation. The state has since fallen behind other states and has not kept up with the science. Now is the time to update our lead law and bring Massachusetts back to the forefront of child protection and provision of safe and equitable housing for all.

The MCAAP urges the Committee to give H.1626 a favorable report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DeWayne Pursley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DeWayne Pursley, M.D., MPH, FAAP
President, the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics