



## The Massachusetts Chapter

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To the Honorable Chairmen and Members  
Joint Committee on Public Health

### **RE: H 2068, An Act relative to lead abatement**

My name is Sean Palfrey, MD. I am a Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health at Boston University and Boston Medical Center, and have worked to prevent lead poisoning in Massachusetts with the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and have served as the Medical Director of the Boston Lead Poisoning Prevention Program for the Boston Public Health Commission for the past two decades or more. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP), which represents over 1,800 pediatricians in the Commonwealth.

The MCAAP supports the critically important change in the definition of "lead poisoning" proposed in H 2068. This bill proposes to make 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of whole venous blood the level considered "poisoning". This change in definition would acknowledge the current scientific evidence showing that 10 micrograms of lead in the blood of a child can cause serious clinical and educational damage, and would enable physicians, public and environmental health professionals to act to abate (remove the lead from) housing units that have poisoned children living in them.

Within my professional lifetime, physicians and scientists have shown, without a shadow of a doubt, that any lead in the body of a child has measurable damaging effects on his or her IQ, ability to concentrate, ability to acquire language, and a variety of other intellectual and physical functions essential for optimal development. The laws and regulations of Massachusetts relating to universal childhood screening for lead poisoning, housing inspections, structural lead abatement, and public education were changed decades ago. However, although unequivocal scientific evidence has built up that any lead in the body of a child can be harmful, and that lead in the paint of houses built before 1978 is the primary source of lead poisoning in this State, our State laws and policies have not been updated, thus preventing physicians and other health and environmental professionals from enforcing the effective removal of these poisons from our housing stock even after they have been shown to poison specific children living there.

A number of improvements need to be made in Massachusetts laws and regulations pertaining to lead poisoning and the progressive removal of lead from all our housing stock, and this bill is an important first step. Last year, the CDC, and then Massachusetts, acknowledged the scientific evidence that there was "no safe level of lead" in a child's body, but in order to act on this knowledge and prevent ongoing decrements in school achievement by poisoned school children (as reflected in MCAS scores, for instance), we need bills like H 2068 to be enacted and funds to be allocated to the MDPH in order for inspections, lead abatement, and public education to take place on an effective scale.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Palfrey, M.D., FAAP