

### **Making Homes Lead-Safe —Keep Lead-Paint Funding In the Stimulus!**

As Congress debates the stimulus package, some GOP leaders recently called the \$100 million “lead paint” line item in the House version of the stimulus bill “wasteful.” Ironically, that budget item would accomplish the very objectives that the stimulus seeks – creating thousands of jobs and reversing the economic impacts for low-income families.

Specifically, the lead hazard control program at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides a decent wage to contractors and tradespeople to remove lead paint hazards from the nation’s housing –and from many of the homes that have been hit hardest by the economic downturn. The \$100 million program would create nearly 10,000 lead-safe units and nearly 3,000 jobs.

Lead abatement is simply a specialized form of construction, like weatherization, rehab or remodeling. It employs carpenters, painters, and other construction contractors who have been thrown out of work by the recent economic downturn. We need these workers and by funding this program, we will put them back to work.

The HUD lead hazard control program was the highest-rated program within HUD, according to the Office of Management and Budget. Scientific evaluations have shown that the program works. In the homes that have been made lead-safe through the program, childhood blood lead levels decreased by 37% and environmental contamination was reduced by 78%.

Most importantly, these projects are shovel-ready. In addition, cities with thousands of poisoned children and hundreds of homes in disrepair desperately need these funds. Last year, HUD funded less than 46% of eligible applicants because funds were insufficient. By providing \$100 million in funding through the stimulus package, HUD will be able to provide funding to all communities with high needs, and reduce lead hazards in homes throughout the country.

The funds would be used for construction, the kind that employs an array of tradespeople and contractors. Windows and doors are replaced with lead-free energy-efficient components. Safe repainting is done to eliminate deteriorated paint. New siding or walls are used to eliminate exposures to lead paint. Dust from the work that could poison children if not handled properly is controlled and cleaned up properly.

Creating a home that keeps children safe is not wasteful. It is a down payment on our future. Every child should be able to grow up in a home that does not have lead paint hazards. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that there are still over 250,000 children who are needlessly poisoned every year. These children face futures with impaired school outcomes, special education needs, diminished job prospects, reduced productivity, and behavior problems. Funding the lead hazard control program is a crucial step in preventing childhood lead poisoning.

The lead abatement stimulus funding should be retained in the final stimulus package. The funding directly impacts children and families across the country and can be an essential part of reviving our economy and employing our workers.