

Executive Summary of Findings

Research report prepared by GHHI for MACDC's Housing Quality and Health Equity Initiative

Documentation of Hazards

- Each of the Gateway Cities studied in this report (Brockton, Holyoke, and Springfield) have higher proportions of housing units estimated to have significantly deteriorated lead paint compared to statewide averages.
- Brockton, Holyoke, and Springfield also have **higher rates of confirmed child elevated blood lead levels** than statewide, as well as relatively **higher rates of asthma**, which can be an indicator of **poor indoor air quality**.
- There are disproportionately higher rates of child elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs) among both low-income populations and communities of color in Massachusetts.

Resources and Gaps Analysis

- Active HUD grants and Get The Lead Out loans fund lead hazard reduction in approximately **436 units per year** across Massachusetts, compared to an **estimated 1.04 million housing units** with significantly deteriorated lead-based paint.
- **More program funding is needed to address lead paint hazards at a larger scale.** In addition, local HUD lead programs did not have a waitlist in at least one Gateway City, suggesting that **community demand is not as high as expected** given the number of housing units with significantly deteriorated lead-based paint.
- In each of the Gateway Cities, there is **higher demand for more holistic home repair programs than for lead focused programs.** This could create an opportunity to integrate lead hazard reduction with other home repair programs to provide comprehensive, whole home health and safety repairs.
- Compared to lead, there are fewer programs and resources focused explicitly on indoor air quality and asthma.
- **Massachusetts' new Sanitary Code became active in May 2023.** Two new provisions could make it easier for tenants to prove indoor air quality hazards and provide greater requirements of landlords for remediation.
- **Stakeholders frequently mentioned the heavy burden of program administration,** and cities such as Springfield did not pursue new HUD lead grants. Additionally, applicants often need more individual support throughout the application process than CBOs have capacity to provide, indicating a need for more applicant support funding.

Housing Stability Analysis

- **Each of the three Gateway Cities have elevated risk factors associated with housing instability,** including frequent moves, evictions, housing cost burden, and crowding. Future surveys can relate these housing instability metrics to housing quality.

Executive Summary of Recommendations

Expanding Resources and Bridging Gaps

- 1) Increase Awareness of Lead Through Public Campaigns:** Communications and education campaign(s) targeted to communities at the highest risk for lead-based paint hazards would help drive demand for HUD and GTLO programs.
- 2) Expand Reach of Financial Support:** Consider adjusting parameters of existing loan products to make even more attractive to potential borrowers, e.g., forgivable loans or grants for low-income borrowers.
- 3) Provide Application Support to Residents:** Funding for a Housing Navigator or similar positions in cities could help residents understand program requirements and secure documents as needed.
- 4) Alleviate Program Administrator Burden:** Providing capacity building and training support to program administrators in navigating the administration of HUD lead programs would help build the ability and willingness of local program administrators to continue applying for and participating in HUD grants.
- 5) Bridge Workforce Development Gap:** Within Gateway Cities, programs could share a common list of high performing contractors; this could alleviate issues where some programs are struggling to find contractors while other programs are not. Resources for lead training, certifications, and training for general construction areas could also help bolster contractor capacity.
- 6) CHIP HSI:** Massachusetts could consider using a CHIP HSI to fund home remediation that improves children's health, including lead and indoor air quality improvements. States like Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin currently operate asthma and lead remediation programs funded by CHIP HSIs.
- 7) Increase Accessibility to Resources in Minority Communities:** Targeted outreach to underrepresented minorities could help even disparities among GTLO borrowers and local lead programs.
- 8) Pursue Additional Federal and State Grants:** Given the drastic funding needs to address housing quality in Gateway Cities and across Massachusetts, stakeholders should pursue new, transformational levels of funding to invest in the state's housing stock.

Linking Housing Quality and Housing Stability

- 9) Administer Housing Stability Survey:** In order to get the most accurate data on housing stability and housing quality, administering a new survey dedicated to housing stability, or adding housing stability questions to existing survey templates, would provide more direct and targeted information than relying on existing general data surveys such as US Census data.
- 10) Future Research into Housing Quality + Instability:** Housing-related health outcomes such as lead poisoning and asthma-related hospitalizations are disproportionately high in Gateway Cities, and future research should further examine the connection between housing quality and health.

Data Collection and Documenting Hazards

- 11) Housing Code Violation Data and Healthy Homes Analysis:** Public access to housing code violation data in cities across the state could help identify buildings that are at the highest risk for health hazards.
- 12) Collect + Analyze Health Data:** A potential area of further research and analysis could include structuring a study using administrative health data from CHIA to estimate impacts on health utilization and cost tied to housing quality, as well as model the health value of scaled home repair policies and programs.