

# Support Funding for Lead Abatement for Massachusetts Homes

## Lead Paint in Older Homes Poses a Serious Threat to Children's Health

Lead is a potent Neurotoxin and exposure has been linked to a variety of health problems, including intellectual and behavioral disabilities, lowered IQ, stunted growth, hearing loss, and anemia. Children are especially at risk and can be exposed to lead in a variety of ways, including through exposure to household paint. Lead was used in paint until 1978 and thousands of homes in Massachusetts still contain lead paint. This is a statewide problem with extensive lead concentration in homes in 18 cities and towns and seven high-risk communities. According to the World Health Organization, the weathering, peeling or chipping of lead-based paints plays a role in children's exposure, especially as some young children eat the fragments or lick dust-laden fingers. There is no effective treatment for lead poisoning and therefore prevention is necessary. Demand for lead abatement funding in Massachusetts has been expanded as a result of the Baker Administration's recognition – through the Department of Public Health – of the high-level of danger associated with lead exposure and subsequent lowering of the threshold at which children are deemed lead poisoned.

## What is the Get the Lead Out (GTLO) program?

The *Get the Lead Out Program* is a partnership between the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and MassHousing. The *GTLO Program*, administered through local rehabilitation agencies, offers no-interest loans to income-eligible homeowners to remove hazardous lead paint from their homes, with repayment deferred until the home is sold or refinanced. In 2016, DHCD & Mass Housing increased the income limits of homeowners who could qualify for these loans, modified some of the loan terms and addressed technical concerns of lenders resulting in a significant increase in demand for this program. The increase in demand for lead abatement loans is evidenced by the 100 loans distributed through the *GTLO Program* in FY2018, representing the largest number of loans distributed in a single Fiscal year in the last decade. Since its inception in 1997, the *GTLO program* sources have been approximately \$99 million, and all but \$2.1 million has been spent. MACDC views the ongoing need for lead-paint abatement as a compelling environmental justice and public health challenge and a further impediment to access to fair housing across the state.

## What Should be done?

MACDC urges the legislature to provide \$5 million to recapitalize the *Get the Lead Out Program*. This should be sufficient to extend the program for an additional three years and will help to ensure a healthier future for the Commonwealth's children.

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