



Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning NYS FY26-27 Budget Testimony

Summary:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning in Monroe County, to provide our health-focussed recommendations on proposals contained or omitted in Governor Hochul's Executive SFY 2026-27 Budget proposal. The Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning unites government, non-profits, and residents to eliminate exposure to lead and home health hazards in Monroe County. Through advocacy, community education, and the delivery of practical resources and support, we ensure that **all people can live, work, and play in the healthy, lead-safe spaces they deserve.**

We strongly urge the NYS Legislature to ensure these healthy and lead-safe spaces exist by:

- Fully funding the Healthy Neighborhoods Program at \$1.45 million.
- Increase funding for localities to implement lead abatement programs and the PHL1377 "The Rental Registry".
- Fully funding the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund.

Background:

Lead is a toxic heavy metal that affects the brain, heart, bones and kidneys. When lead is absorbed into the body it can cause **serious life-long health problems**, especially for children, but for adults too. Long-term health impacts of lead exposure for children can include damage to organs and nervous system as well as behavioral and cognitive problems.¹ Lead poisoning in adults can cause hypertension, kidney damage and reproductive problems.² There is no known safe level of lead: **even tiny amounts of lead (as little as a sugar packet's worth) can be harmful.**

The risk of lead exposure is high in Monroe County due to our old and often deteriorated housing stock. Lead-based paint was banned in 1978 and so buildings built before 1978 are far more likely to contain lead. That means roughly 70% of Monroe County's housing is at risk. The older the building, the higher the risk. The City of Rochester has a much higher risk with 72% of homes built before 1960³.

¹ <https://council.nyc.gov/data/lead-in-nyc-homes/>

² <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2584.pdf>

³ U.S. Census Bureau. "Year Structure Built." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B25034, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACS1Y2024.B25034?t=Year+Structure+Built&q=160XX00US3663000>. Accessed on 6 Feb 2026.

Renovations in buildings built before 1978 can result in dangerous levels of lead dust, endangering both the building occupants and those doing the work. As the state moves towards achieving its climate goals, many pre-1978 buildings will need to be updated before making them more energy efficient. Lead-based paint and other environmental hazards will need to be remediated before those energy efficient upgrades can be made.

Childhood lead poisoning continues to be a persistent problem in Monroe County. In 2024, the last year of data available, **299 children had confirmed elevated blood lead levels**. Lead exposure does not happen in a vacuum, it is related to many other environmental home health hazards. Any successful healthy home approach needs to be holistic and addressing just one hazard at a time is inefficient and ineffective. The Healthy Neighborhood Program (HNP) is uniquely designed to identify and reduce a broad range of risks that often co-occur in the same homes.

Lead-Safe and Healthy Housing Budget Priorities:

Healthy Neighborhoods Program

We were dismayed to see that the Governor's SFY 2026-27 Executive Budget does not include funding for the Healthy Neighborhoods Program. **The Healthy Neighborhood Program is a proven, prevention-focused initiative that proactively addresses critical home safety and public health risks in underserved communities, preventing minor issues from escalating into emergencies.**

In Monroe County, the program conducts **500 culturally-responsive household visits annually**, delivering the following core services:

- **In-Home Safety Assessments:** CHWs identify hidden hazards to reduce health risks related to asthma, indoor air quality, lead exposure, and home safety hazards.
- **Safety Resources:** Provision of low-cost tools: fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and specialized cleaning supplies to lower risk from allergies and hidden lead dust.
- **Educational Resources:** Connecting residents to municipal code enforcement and emergency repair grants for furnaces and water heaters.

The HNP reduces preventable household hazards and avoids costly emergency responses through modest investments. It serves households who would otherwise fall through the cracks, including families who are not currently eligible for Medicaid.

This quote helps to illustrate how small, targeted interventions through this program have resulted in meaningful and lasting change for Monroe County families.

“As a mother with multiple children, the cleaning supplies provided by the Healthy Neighborhood Program made a huge difference in our home. We were able to keep our home clean and safe from all insects and create a healthier living environment.”

We strongly urge the New York State Legislature to restore full funding of \$1.4 million for the Healthy Neighborhoods Program in the SFY 2026-27 Budget.

Lead Poisoning Prevention Programming Funding:

- \$40M for the county health department lead programs in the Aid to Localities budget.
- \$20M to implement Public Health Law 1377: the New York State Rental Registry and Proactive Inspection Program in the Aid to Localities and State Operations budget.
- \$20M+ for the lead abatement program in the Capital Projects and State Operations budget.

Energy Retrofitting and Green Renovations, Including Lead Remediation:

Include the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification Fund bill language in the Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation Article VII bill.

- \$200M for the GAP Fund for NYSERDA in the Capital Projects budget.

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