

Pittsburgh City Council  
July 10, 2021

Good morning City Council Members and staff,

My name is Talor Musil, and I am the Healthy Policy Coordinator at Women for a Healthy Environment, a Pittsburgh-based public health non-profit. Today I would like to address Pittsburgh's American Rescue Plan funding proposal on behalf of the Get the Lead Out, Pittsburgh campaign, which seeks to shine a light on lead poisoning, connect families to resources, and drive change.

Lead poisoning is an all too common, 100% preventable and solvable problem.

**We know the impacts of lead.** Lead poisoning impacts an individual for a lifetime; manifesting as problems such as developmental delays early in life, lower third grade reading levels, and anger and impulsivity into adulthood. Furthermore, lead disproportionately impacts communities of color, in fact around 6 times more so than their white counterparts, and is concentrated in communities where maintenance is deferred in rental properties and ripple effects of redlining continue to cause disparity in access to resources.

**We know exactly where to look for lead hazards:** homes built before 1978 (meaning they have lead-based paint in them), dusty friction surfaces like doorways, aging drinking water service lines, and demolitions of older buildings.

**We know the solutions:** test for lead hazards in the homes that are most vulnerable and remediate hazards safely, clean dusty surfaces often, replace service lines, and soak demolition sites with water.

The American Rescue Plan funds present a unique opportunity to jumpstart these solutions in Pittsburgh, in the footsteps of cities like Philadelphia, Lancaster, Cleveland, Baltimore, Detroit, and many others who have passed lead-safety measures. Mayor Peduto's Press Release states that the proposal allocates 20 million to addressing lead in water and paint, and Get the Lead Out absolutely supports this.

In order to comprehensively prevent lead exposure for residents, **ALL** sources of lead -- water, paint, dust, and soil -- must be considered. In fact, paint and household dust containing lead is the most common source of exposure identified in local assessments following lead poisoning cases.

In describing why Congress encouraged cities to use of these funds to address lead, the Department of the Treasury stated:

[F]or children living in homes with lead paint, spending substantially more time at home raises the risk of developing [lead poisoning], while screenings for [lead poisoning] declined during the pandemic. The combination of these underlying social and health vulnerabilities may have contributed to more severe public health outcomes of the pandemic within these communities, resulting in an exacerbation of pre-existing disparities in health outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

This public health and environmental justice issue must be prioritized in the ARP budget.

While we are grateful for these public hearings, Get the Lead Out is disappointed in the lack of clarity around the timeline for approval and opportunities for public input. To ensure that this clarity is reached, we call for Council's vote to be paused until an equitable, people-centered public process is conducted.

Thank you,

Talor Musil

Health Policy Coordinator

Women for a Healthy Environment