



NAACP *National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People*

Washington, DC Branch

1000 U Street, NW • Suite 100 • Washington, DC 20001

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

The Honorable Mayor Muriel Bowser
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Muriel Bowser and Councilmembers,

We urge you to address environmental health disparities that result in increased lead exposure and childhood asthma for residents in Wards 5, 7, and 8. The District of Columbia has one of the highest rates of childhood asthma in the nation and many district residents are also exposed to lead, either through the places where they live or the water that they drink. Disproportionate health inequity issues continue to exacerbate adverse health outcomes for residents in the aforementioned wards. More than 80% of the District's housing was built before 1978 and contain various levels of lead (Lead paint was outlawed in 1978). There are many known lead water service lines in the city that have not been replaced and a sizeable number of water service lines of 'unknown origin' that are thought to contain lead as well.

Furthermore, there are stark geographical differences in the incidence of childhood asthma. Children living in Wards 7 and 8 are 20 times more likely to seek emergency care for asthma than children residing in Ward 3. In the District, child lifetime asthma is nearly four times more prevalent among Black children (23%) than White children (6.5%). Exposure to lead and asthma inducing triggers (mold, rodent and/or insect infestation, etc.) combine to create unhealthy living conditions for families, especially those with young children. These issues are especially pronounced for children living in rental housing in historically marginalized and/or vulnerable communities. District leaders and agencies should urgently act to reduce those factors contributing to childhood asthma and fully replace all lead water service lines to stop environmental health disparities.

We urge your immediate action to implement several key environmental health reforms and corrective actions including:

- Create a health inspection capacity that responds when children are sick or when there is a known or suspected exposure to lead or asthma triggers. Such inspectors would have the authority to implement building wide inspections when a sick child has been identified in one unit of a property housing multiple families. **[Lead Agency: DC Health; Collaborating Agencies: DOEE, DCRA]**
- Expand the Lead Service Line Interagency Task Force to include the DC Department of Health. **[Lead Agency: DOEE; Collaborating Agency: DC Health]**
- Identify the number of District households/residents connected to lead water service lines. **[Lead Agency: DOEE; Collaborating Agency: DC Water]**
- Identify households connected to lead water service lines with children aged 6 and under (Disaggregated by Ward) and immediately provide water filtration systems pending full replacement of the lead water service lines. **[Lead Agency: DOEE; Collaborating Agency: DC Water]**
- Prepare an annual report for the Council analyzing data on housing code violations and housing improvements such as lead remediation and lead service line replacement in homes and attempting to correlate addresses from data on elevated blood lead levels and/or asthma exacerbations in children. **[Collaborating Agencies: DCRA, DHCD, DOEE, DHCD]**

- DCHA shall allocate sufficient financial and technical resources to nonprofit organizations that can enable Tenant Associations (TAs), Resident Councils (RCs) and similarly constituted residential housing bodies (in properties receiving DC government funds or constructed with public subsidies) to strengthen their capacities to independently monitor and assess DCHA/DCRA efforts to identify, remediate and resolve environmental hazards. **[Lead Agency: DHCD; Collaborating Agencies: DOEE, DCRA, DCHA]**
- Increase resources allocated for education, outreach, and testing for lead exposure and childhood asthma. **[Collaborating Agencies: DCRA, DHCD, DOEE, DHCD]**
- Prioritize the health of residents living in housing affected by lead exposure and where children with asthma reside. Conduct annual inspections of public and private rental properties to take public health factors into account when allocating public resources and implementing agency programs. **[Lead Agency: DCRA; Collaborating Agencies: DOEE, DC Health, DCHA]**
- Create a special session of an Interagency working group (including DC Department of Health, DCHA, DHCD, DCRA, DC Health Care Finance, DOEE, OAG, OTA at a minimum) and include external stakeholders to discuss, plan and budget for interagency coordination for inspection and remediation of hazardous conditions in the environment, and housing infrastructure. **[Lead Agency: OAG; Collaborating Agencies: DCHA, DHCD, DCRA, DC Health, DC Health Care Finance, OTA]**
- Establish Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) between the DC Department of Health and District of Columbia Department that share responsibility for addressing health hazards in housing. **[Lead Agency: DCRA; Collaborating Agencies: DCHA, DHCD, OAG, DC Health, DC Health Care Finance, OTA]**

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, recommend the immediate implementation of the administrative and legislative actions outlined above, which we believe, would make the District of Columbia a healthier place to live, especially for our children and future generations.

Sincerely,



Akosua Ali
President
NAACP DC Branch

Sincerely,



Neil Boyer
Environmental & Climate Justice Chair
NAACP DC Branch

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:

Black Millennials 4 Flint
Campaign for Lead Free Water
CARECEN
Center for Black Equity
Center for Community Engagement, Environmental
Justice and Health
Children's Law Center
Christ Our Redeemer AME Church
DC Asthma Coalition
DC Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
DC Healthy Housing Collaborative
DC Chapter, Sierra Club
EarthJustice
Empower DC
Extinction Rebellion
Fairlawn Citizens Association
Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
Genuine Sisters Supporting Sisters

Greater New Hope Baptist Church
Harriet's Wildest Dreams
Interfaith Power & Light
Katrina's Dream
Kingman Park Civic Assn.
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Mount Olivet Baptist Church
Namati
National Black United Front DC
Patricia Bishop, Resident, Greenleaf Gardens
Sebrena Rhodes, Resident, Ivy City
Sunrise DC
The Family Place
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban
Affairs
Washington Interfaith Network
We Power DC
YACHAD