



CITY OF CENTRAL FALLS  
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Hon. Marvin Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

***RE: Article 3, Section 17: Statewide Mandatory Lead Registry***

To Honorable Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing today with great concern regarding the proposed delay of important protections against childhood lead poisoning contained in Article 3, Section 17.

Central Falls has received local and national attention for our efforts to stop the lead poisoning of our children. The rates of childhood lead poisoning were steadily declining until 2020 when pandemic measures meant children spending more time in their homes. As children spent more of their time indoors, they came into contact with serious lead-based substances that spiked the percent of child lead poisoning in the state. This was especially true in our urban core where a majority of homes are considered older-housing stock.

This issue is critically important because child lead poisoning can be fatal at high enough levels. A child that is lead poisoned may end up with life-long learning disabilities and cognitive impairments that directly impact their ability to live a prosperous life, personally and economically.

Since this spike in lead poisoning rates, it has been a priority of mine to address the lead poisoning crisis. I have empowered our legal department and code enforcement staff to develop a program to make our homes "lead safe." We have also partnered with wonderful community and governmental stakeholders like the Department of Health, the Childhood Lead Action Project, and Rhode Island Housing's LeadSafe Homes Program. In the last two years alone, the city has brought over 1,000 units of housing into compliance.

The City also has a strong relationship with the Office of the Attorney General and last year I strongly supported General Neronha's Registry bill, the purpose of which was to establish a registry where all landlords would be required to register units, with basic contact information for the landlord and/or agent and, for pre-1978 units, to also require landlords to file lead certificates or proof of exemption, which would also be publicly accessible to tenants or prospective tenants.

In this budget article, last year's legislation is changed *significantly* in that it limits the registry to pre-1978 properties only, it drastically limits the publicly accessible portion of the registry and it changes the effective date for the Department of Health to set up the registry to September 1, 2025.

*I am asking the Committee to reject the proposed diluting of this important legislation.* First, the registry should universally apply to all landlords. A registry – like so many other license and registration requirements in so many other areas – is a basic health and consumer protection measure that goes beyond lead poisoning prevention. Second, the registry needs to show the actual lead safe certificates so that tenants and municipal code enforcement officers know when the certificates expire. Further, if a landlord is not publicly listed on the registry, it could mean *either* that they have fully complied with the registry or that they have not complied at all; it will be impossible to tell. Finally, there is no reason to push implementation of the Registry out for yet another year. Time is of the essence to prevent all our children from being poisoned.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely Yours,



Maria Rivera  
Mayor

Cc: Representative Scott Slater, First Vice Chair  
Representative Alex Marszalkowski, Second Vice Chair  
Representative Karen Alzate,  
Representative Jacquelyn M. Baginski  
Representative Nathan W. Biah  
Representative Terri-Denise Cortvriend  
Representative Grace Diaz  
Representative John G. Edwards  
Representative Raymond A. Hull  
Representative George A. Nardone  
Representative William W. O'Brien  
Representative Brian J. Rea  
Representative Teresa Ann Tanzi  
Representative Camille Vella-Wilkinson