



CITY OF CENTRAL FALLS
MAYOR MARIA RIVERA

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Hon. Carol McEntee
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Opposition and Seeking Amendments to H7559 and H7560

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I write on behalf of the City of Central Falls in opposition to, or alternatively, to request amendments to, H7559 and H7560.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Central Falls was the hardest hit community in the state by elevated childhood blood lead levels, due in large part to our predominantly pre-1978 housing stock. In response, the City, in partnership with Rhode Island Housing, developed a Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to identify potentially hazardous properties and enforce compliance with lead safety certificate requirements. Since August 2021, this program has brought more than 1,000 housing units into compliance. Significantly, there has been little to no landlord opposition to this program in Central Falls.

The consequences of lead poisoning are profound and long-lasting. Elevated blood lead levels are associated with developmental delays, behavioral challenges, and increased school suspensions. The harm extends well beyond the affected child and family, deepening inequities across our education, health care, and criminal justice systems. Lead poisoning is not an isolated problem; it is a statewide public health issue with far-reaching consequences.

H7559 would jeopardize the progress Central Falls has made in combating childhood lead poisoning by prohibiting the Department of Health from sharing its Lead Safe Certificate Database with other government agencies, including municipalities such as Central Falls. *See* page 2, lines 11–12. The City has relied on access to this database on an almost daily basis for the past five years to verify compliance and ensure that landlords are adhering to Rhode Island's lead safety laws. We respectfully request that this language be removed so that municipalities may continue this essential enforcement work.

H7560 poses a similarly serious threat to the City's nationally recognized lead poisoning prevention efforts. The bill would prevent housing inspectors, code enforcement officers, and municipal solicitors from holding noncompliant landlords accountable in municipal housing court. That enforcement authority is a core component of our program. The City works cooperatively with property owners by offering resources and support to help them bring units into compliance and make them lead-safe. When landlords fail to act, however, the ability to

pursue enforcement in municipal court is critical. We therefore respectfully request that this portion of the bill also be removed.

Thank you for your consideration of the City's concerns and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Maria Rivera

Mayor

Cc: Members of the House Judiciary Committee