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## **Green & Healthy Homes Initiative Kicks-Off National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in Maryland**

*National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week highlights the importance of testing  
children and the homes they live in*

**Baltimore, MD, October 24, 2016**—Today the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative led a press conference with state and Baltimore officials to kick-off Maryland’s National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) events. Activities throughout the week inform and educate Maryland families, caregivers, educators, property owners, landlords, and health providers about the serious health effects caused by lead poisoning and ways to prevent the disease.

This year’s NLPPW theme in Maryland, “Lead has no boundaries”, underscores the fact that lead poisoning can affect all of us, regardless of geography, race or income status. Because there is no safe level of lead in the body, it is important to test both children and their homes for lead and abate hazardous lead conditions in homes and rental properties as quickly as possible. Throughout the week advocates will emphasize the importance of regular blood lead testing from a primary care provider, and of changes to state regulations that call for additional testing for children. In 2015 the Hogan administration’s new Lead Testing Targeting Plan identified all areas of Maryland as potentially “at risk” for lead exposure.

“There is only one cure for lead poisoning and that is prevention. GHHI supports the call to expand the level of lead testing, not only for children themselves but for homes and rental properties built before 1978,” said GHHI President and CEO Ruth Ann Norton. “As a community committed to protecting our children and improving their opportunities, we must increase our investment in primary prevention and source control as well as enforcement.”

Norton was joined today by Shana Green from Baltimore, whose son Zoltan suffered from lead poisoning, and by Secretary Ben Grumbles of the Department of the Environment (MDE), Secretary Kenneth C. Holt of the Department of Housing and Community Development, Deputy Secretary Dr. Howard Haft of the Department of Health and Mental

Hygiene, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Governor Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, HUD Field Office Director Carol Bryant Payne, and Baltimore City Health Department Chief of Staff Kristin Rzeczkowski.

New regulations issued by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) in March require blood lead testing of all children born on or after January 1, 2015 at their 12 and 24 month checkups, regardless of where they live. Previously, only children living in so-called “at risk” ZIP codes or who were enrolled in Medicaid had to be tested.

According to DHMH Deputy Secretary Howard Haft, “Our state strategy depends on integrating the health care of the child, the public health response of local health departments and the Department of the Environment, and community-based efforts to eliminate sources of lead, supported by the Department of Housing and Community Development.”

A 2015 Childhood Blood Lead Surveillance report released by MDE this month showed a slight increase in the number of children with elevated blood levels (over 10 micrograms per deciliter) statewide from 355 in 2014 to 377 last year. The increase is attributed largely to the progress Maryland has made over the past year to expand blood lead testing.

“The Department of the Environment is committed to reducing children’s exposure to lead in all types of housing in all areas of the state,” said Secretary Grumbles, whose department houses the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. “We are making progress but have much more to do to eliminate this completely preventable disease.”

“The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development is proud to partner with nonprofits like the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative to work to prevent lead poisoning across the state,” said Secretary Holt. “Lead poisoning prevention is a key part of the state’s efforts to revitalize Baltimore City through Project C.O.R.E. - Creating Opportunities for Renewal and Enterprise. Working together with the Maryland Stadium Authority, Baltimore City and community advocates, we developed extensive environmental and safety standards to prevent lead dust and other hazards during demolitions. These safety protocols are at a level rarely, if ever seen before, and we believe they can be the basis for national standards for urban demolition, proving, once again, that Maryland is at the vanguard for lead poisoning prevention.”

Parents and caregivers can reduce a child’s exposure to lead in many ways. Some simple steps to help protect kids include:

- Get your Home Tested. Before you buy or rent an older home (pre-1978), ask for a lead inspection.
- Get your Child Tested. Even if your young children seem healthy, ask your doctor to test them for lead.

- Get the Facts. Go to [www.GHHI.org](http://www.GHHI.org) for information to keep your home free of lead and other health hazards and for information on home assessments and remediation work.

***About the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative***

*The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) is a national nonprofit working with partners in over 30 cities and counties to break the link between unhealthy housing and unhealthy children. Formerly known as the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, GHHI replaces stand-alone intervention programs with an integrated, whole-house approach that produces healthy, safe and energy efficient homes. As a result, GHHI is improving health, economic and social outcomes for families across the country. Learn more at [www.ghhi.org](http://www.ghhi.org) and follow us [@HealthyHousing](https://twitter.com/HealthyHousing).*

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