



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, March 7, 2022**

HB 5045, An Act Reducing Lead Poisoning

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5045, An Act Reducing Lead Poisoning**. CHA supports this bill.

Since early 2020, hospitals and health systems have been at the center of Connecticut’s response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, acting as a vital partner with the state and our communities. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, procured essential equipment and supplies, and stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations. Hospitals have been an essential component of the statewide vaccine distribution plan including efforts to reach and serve historically under-resourced communities disproportionately affected by the virus. Through it all, hospitals and health systems have continued to provide high-quality care for everyone, regardless of ability to pay. This tireless commitment to the COVID-19 response confirms the value of strong hospitals in Connecticut’s public health infrastructure and the well-being of our communities and reinforces the need for a strong partnership between the state and hospitals.

HB 5045 is intended to substantially improve the state’s ability to diminish the risk of lead poisoning in children, which is among the most profound and enduring threats to child health and development in the nation and in Connecticut. Exposure to lead in childhood can have catastrophic impacts on health and development, including irreversible learning and developmental disabilities—impacts that limit individuals’ ability to realize their potential to lead full and independent lives.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has reported at least 2,000 children were poisoned every year from 2012 through 2016. DPH numbers show fewer cases were reported in 2017 (1,665). Exposure to lead is an important health equity issue; its effects are most acutely felt in our most vulnerable communities, including communities of color. Black and Hispanic children are more likely to have elevated blood lead levels (BLLs), defined as equal to or greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter, than white and non-Hispanic children. In 2016, elevated BLLs for Black children were 4.8% compared to 2.0% among white children, and 3.5% among Hispanic children compared to 2.4% among non-Hispanic children.¹

¹ [CT DPH 2017 Annual Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance Report](#)

Under HB 5045, Governor Lamont proposes strengthening early intervention in instances of lead poisoning by gradually reducing the blood lead level that triggers parental notifications and home inspections to more closely align with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. The change of threshold for reporting will go from 10 micrograms per deciliter to 3.5 micrograms per deciliter, which will align Connecticut with the current CDC recommendation. Local public health will be required to investigate the source of lead, and intervene, at lower microgram per deciliter thresholds, from 15 micrograms per deciliter today to 5 micrograms per deciliter in 2024.

These new requirements will substantially improve the state's ability to identify and address the problem of lead exposure. Recognizing that much of the responsibility for remediation falls on Connecticut's cities and towns, Governor Lamont separately proposes that the state address the root causes of lead poisoning by investing \$70 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in remediation and abatement projects, so more homes are lead-safe and free of other dangers like asbestos and mold.

We applaud these efforts to address this important public health issue, which threatens the health and development of all children and contributes to Connecticut's enduring racial and ethnic health disparities.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.