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## Coalition Mobilizes to Propose Tenant Protections Against Lead Poisoning

CLEVELAND (January 11, 2019) — A coalition of Cleveland community organizations is mobilizing to propose a ballot initiative to protect tenants from lead poisoning. The coalition -- Cleveland Lead Advocates for Safe Housing (CLASH) -- formed to take action that our region's public officials have so far refused to take.

"The public has waited for years through mismanagement, inaction, and inadequate measures from our city leaders. All the while, more Cleveland children have been lead poisoned," said Rebecca Maurer, an attorney who is helping to draft the ballot initiative. "If City Council won't seriously consider proposed legislation to address the lead crisis, the time is right to take the issue to the public."

Under current law, Cleveland tenants are forced to use their children as lead detectors. There is no guarantee that their home in Cleveland will be lead safe and they often have no way of knowing there is a problem until their child is poisoned. Elevated blood levels have been related to low educational attainment, impaired impulse control, and increased risk of interaction with the criminal justice system.

The coalition's proposed ballot initiative follows a plan similar to the one laid out by former Cleveland City Council Member Jeff Johnson in Proposed Ordinance 990-17. The Coalition believes the legislation will reduce the number of children being poisoned and take the onus off of tenants, who may be at risk for retaliation from their landlords if they complain or attempt to take legal action.

"Calls for universal testing and increased community education are a step in the right direction" adds Yvonka Hall, outreach director of the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus. "But testing children does nothing to help us find lead poisoned homes before they make a child sick. Cleveland needs to step up and match its peer cities such as Rochester in adopting a primary prevention model."

The Cleveland Lead Safe Network (CLSN), which has been working to protect the interests of tenants at risk for lead poisoning, assembled the coalition members. The coalition includes, SPAN-Ohio, Black Lives Matter of Cuyahoga County, the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus, Organize! Ohio, and Cleveland Democratic Socialists of America.

The coalition plans to collect signatures from Cleveland citizens and get the legislation on the ballot in an upcoming election.

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