



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Hillary Wasserman 212 784 5726

hwasserman@groupgordon.com

Lead Poisoning Report: New York Has Gone 14 Years Without A Single Enforcement Action on Private Lead Inspection Law

(New York, NY, September 25, 2018) New York City's regulators have not taken a single enforcement action against any landlord for failing to conduct annual lead inspections in the 14 years since the city passed an ambitious lead poisoning prevention law in 2004, according to a new report on children's lead poisoning by a coalition of environmental and housing groups.

Local Law 1 aimed to end lead poisoning in New York City by 2010, but more than 61,000 children under six have had elevated blood lead levels since 2010, according to the report, which contains multiple specific examples of New York failing to take enforcement action against negligent landlords. According to the most recent Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) data, 97% of the children found to be lead poisoned since the beginning of 2010 resided in private dwellings.

The groups examined data on violations and enforcement actions from the DOHMH and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), which shows that HPD is failing to enforce the primary prevention measures of Local Law 1, whose goal was to make landlords responsible for proactively finding and abating lead paint hazards before children became lead poisoned, and to eventually remove all lead paint hazards from private rental dwellings throughout the city.

Lead in children's bloodstreams at any level can lead irreversibly to effects such as decreased intelligence, behavioral difficulties, and learning problems. Still, city agencies have placed families with young children into apartments contaminated with lead paint that should have been abated before the families moved in if landlords were complying with the law, the report shows.

"Obviously, without enforcement, negligent landlords will continue to violate this essential obligation with complete impunity, resulting in the continued exposure of vulnerable children to lead-based paint hazards," said Rachel Spector, Director of the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, one of the groups behind the report. "Meanwhile, we are harming children's developing brains and bodies. New York can do so much better than this by living up to the ambitious intent of the 2004 law."

Adriana Espinoza, New York City Program Director at the New York League of Conservation Voters, said: "When our laws are not properly enforced, New Yorkers can be left vulnerable and the consequences can be dire. New York City must live up to its ambitious lead poisoning prevention policies and provide adequate enforcement against landlords who negligently allow families to live in homes with hazardous lead paint. This report shows a lack of enforcement of Local Law 1 that has left children exposed to lead hazards. New Yorkers deserve better."

"We frequently work with tenants who have been exposed to lead levels well above the legal threshold, especially in cases where their landlord is doing luxury rehabilitation work in pre-1960 buildings," said Liam Reilly, with the Cooper Square Committee. "When the safe work practices outlined in Local Law 1 of 2004 are not enforced, tenants in gentrifying neighborhoods who have decided to stay and fight for their homes can be subjected to toxic levels of lead dust. Aggressive landlords understand the threat that these disruptive renovations bring and often ignore the safe work practices in it in an attempt to potentially push out the remaining rent regulated tenants from the buildings."

More information is available in the full report, available Sept 25 at nylpi.org.

-30-

Notes to editors

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)

Founded more than 40 years ago by leaders of the bar, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest pursues equality and justice for New Yorkers. NYLPI works toward a New York where all people can thrive in their communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. In our vision, all New Yorkers live with dignity and independence, with the access and resources they need to succeed. NYLPI's community-driven approach powers its commitments to civil rights and to disability, health, immigrant, and environmental justice. NYLPI seeks lasting change through litigation, community organizing, policy advocacy, pro bono service, and education.

About Cooper Square Committee

The Cooper Square Committee (CSC) works with area residents to contribute to the preservation and development of affordable, environmentally healthy housing and community/cultural spaces so that the Cooper Square area remains racially, economically, and culturally diverse. The Cooper Square Committee has spearheaded significant neighborhood victories in its history, comprising nearly 60 years of tenant organizing, community-based planning, advocacy and development. It relies on the active involvement of its members in the organization's work to advance its affordable housing agenda.

About Northern Manhattan Improvement Committee

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, a community-based multi-services agency, has been active in organizing, educating, and litigating on childhood lead poisoning prevention for nearly a quarter of a century, service as counsel to the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning.

About NYCLV

NYLCV is the only statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action. It is non-partisan, pragmatic and effective.

###