
Housing Committee

HB 1653

Brief Description: Assessing environmental lead paint hazards.

Sponsors: Representatives O'Brien, Moeller, Lovick, Clibborn, Roberts, B. Sullivan, Murray, Morrell, Ericks, Campbell, Chase and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) and the Department of Health (DOH) to jointly assess housing stock in Washington State to identify geographic areas of potentially high risk for child lead exposure.
- Requires the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Ecology (DOE) to establish a lead paint hazard education and awareness strategy for property owners and tenants.

Hearing Date: 2/8/05

Staff: Robyn Dupuis (786-7166).

Background:

Lead exposure poses a very serious health threat to young children. Lead poisoning in children can cause irreversible learning difficulties, mental retardation, and delayed neurological and physical development. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the greatest risk occurs in older units with lead-based paint hazards that either will be, or are, currently occupied by families with children under 6 years of age, and are low-income, and are undergoing renovation or maintenance that disturbs lead-based paint. Census data show that more than 1,500,000 homes in Washington state were built prior to 1978 when the sale of residential lead-based paint was banned.

In 2004, 52 children in Washington, ages 0-6, were reported by the Department of Health (DOH) to have an elevated blood lead level. DOH estimates that only about five percent of Washington children are actually tested for lead poisoning, and that there are likely to exist between 1,000 and 3,000 children, ages 0-6, in Washington with elevated blood lead levels. A 1999 statewide survey concluded that approximately .9% of all one and two year-old children had elevated blood lead levels, and that 3.7% of Hispanic children of the same ages had elevated blood lead levels. Surveys before 1999, as well as the 1999 statewide survey found that the percentage of children with lead poisoning was higher in central Washington than in the rest of the state.

Current Lead Related Activities in Washington State

Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

In 1992 Congress passed the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act, also known as Title X. Under Title X, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal agencies developed a national program to prevent and reduce lead-based paint exposures and hazards. Title X allows states to provide for the accreditation of lead-based paint activities programs, the certification of persons completing such training programs, and the licensing of lead-based paint activity contractors. In the state of Washington, the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development operates the Lead-Based Paint program which focuses on accreditation and licensing, but which also includes consumer outreach, education and awareness activities.

Department of Health

The Washington Department of Health (DOH) operates a Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance program through its Epidemiology Office. The results of all clinical blood lead tests administered to Washington residents are reported to the DOH which has maintained a computer registry of all children with elevated blood levels since 1993 (the Childhood Blood Lead Registry). The adult registry is maintained at the Department of Labor and Industries. If a child's test results show elevated blood lead levels between 10 and 14 micrograms per deciliter, the DOH notifies the appropriate local health jurisdiction which initiates follow-up activities, including having the child retested at appropriate intervals and counseling the family on how to avoid lead exposure. If blood levels are above 15 micrograms per deciliter, in addition to notifying the local health jurisdiction, the DOH contracts with a licensed Lead-Based Paint Risk Assessor to conduct an environmental investigation into the conditions of the child's home (except in the case of King County which has dedicated staff to conduct investigations).

Through registry data, the DOH is able to identify geographic areas of the state which experience proportionately high cases of childhood elevated blood lead levels. The DOH has used past funding streams in order to implement programs specifically to address lead issues in those areas.

In addition to lead poisoning surveillance, the DOH also produces a brochure which outlines the risks of lead poisoning for children. This brochure is distributed statewide to all new Washington parents through the Child Profile Program.

Department of Ecology

In addition to lead-based paint exposure in homes, children face exposure through contact with soil that, in some Washington areas, contains low-to-moderate levels of lead from three main historical sources: emissions from metal smelters, use of arsenical pesticides, and combustion of leaded gasoline. The DOE produces a Child Use Area Soil Sampling Guidance document to help homeowners, businesses, developers, and local governments characterize lead concentrations in soil for the purposes of reducing exposure to these common soil contaminants. Through the DOE Area Wide Soil Contamination Project, individuals and organizations can determine whether there is the potential for exposure to elevated levels of lead in soil at specific properties, and identify actions they can use to reduce exposure. There have been specific efforts to educate residents in particular high risk areas of the state, through the distribution of lead awareness literature.

Local Efforts

Local lead hazard control and education programs exist in several local communities, including Spokane, which was awarded a Lead Hazard Control Grant (\$2,290,954) in 2004, and Seattle, which is currently operating a 2003 Healthy Homes Demonstration grant (\$850,000). Seattle also

has a "ClearCorps" program: an AmeriCorps program which includes outreach and education activities regarding lead-based paint risks, among other activities.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development and the Department of Health will jointly assess housing stock in Washington state to identify areas of potentially high risk for child lead exposure and will report on their findings to the legislature by December 31, 2005.

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development will collaborate with the Department of Health and the Department of Ecology to establish a lead paint hazard education and awareness strategy to notify and educate owners of affected property and tenants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.