

Health Care Committee

SB 5478

Brief Description: Reducing childhood lead exposure.

Sponsors: By Senators Franklin, Winsley, Prentice, Shin, Costa, Eide, T. Sheldon, Fairley, Jacobsen, Thibaudeau, B. Sheldon, Regala, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Spanel, McAuliffe, Fraser and Snyder.

Brief Summary of Bill

- *The Department of Health is given the authority to establish an education program to reduce childhood exposure to lead in residential settings. The department is directed to seek and use federal funds for the program.*

Hearing Date: 3/20/01

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background:

Exposure to lead is highly dangerous, especially to children ages six and younger. Young children are more likely to ingest lead dust, and as such, are at higher risk for lead poisoning. In addition, children are more likely to be effected by lead poisoning than adults due to their smaller and still developing bodies. Low to moderate lead poisoning in children can cause nervous system and kidney damage, decreased muscle and bone growth, hearing damage, speech, language, and behavior problems, learning disabilities and reduced IQ. Other studies have linked lead poisoning to anti-social and criminal behavior.

Lead was commonly used in paint until it was banned for residential use in 1978. Ingesting or breathing dust from lead-based paint is the most common form of lead exposure. Dust is released by the deterioration of paint and during remodeling. Private contractors are required to use proper techniques to control lead dust, but many homeowners perform their own remodeling without using or knowing of these techniques.

There is concern that families in older housing are not aware of the dangers of lead

poisoning, that they do not know how to detect and prevent existing lead hazards, or how to control lead dust while doing their own remodeling.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Health is given the authority to establish an education program to reduce childhood exposure to lead in residential settings. The priority is on older housing. The department is directed to seek and use federal funds for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.