

Governor Christie: We Are Investing In Lead Remediation In A Fiscally Responsible Way

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: So New Jersey's approach is far more protective than a majority of states. In fact, screenings for lead exposure have increased dramatically over the past 20 years with 20 times more children being tested in 2015. The total in 2015, we tested 206,221 children in New Jersey compared to just 10,200 children who were tested back in 1998, so we've increased that twentyfold. According to the latest data, 97% of New Jersey's children under the age of 6 have had at least one blood test for lead in their lifetime, and I want to make something very clear and again a point that's been distorted: The primary lead concern in New Jersey has been and remains the outdated lead-based paint in our old housing stocks, not water sources. That's the major problem we have regarding lead in New Jersey, so as part of the conversation about how we protect children in their homes and deal with the legacy of lead paint, I said that I have no objection to providing money for lead containment efforts, and I don't, so over the past few weeks my administration has been hard at work developing recommendations for me on how to best address this issue moving forward. Today, I'm happy to announce an additional \$10 million in this year's budget to support an improved lead remediation and containment program for low- and moderate-income households in New Jersey. This funding has been identified by my administration within existing 2016 budget funds and will be made available for this purpose, so that we can address and double nearly the amount of money we're spending on lead remediation efforts but do it in a fiscally responsible way. The Department of Community Affairs will work through nonprofit organizations as we always have with experience in lead remediation programs, identify licensed lead-evaluation contractors and EPA-certified, lead-safe renovation organizations to assess and remediate lead-based paint hazards. The estimated costs will average about \$20,000 a unit in repair and related costs for eligible households to fund their remediation plan. DCA will then collect data from homeowners to determine best practices for potential program expansion and refinement in the FY 2017 budget. This effort will operate in addition to what we're already doing to address lead, so we're going to

continue to do the program as we've done before and what I'm announcing today is we have located another \$10 million in funds that are available within the current fiscal year budget and we're going to make those available on top of the funds we're already spending. New Jersey has been a national leader on the issue of lead paint in housing and the resulting decline in cases proves that point, so we are working hard and making sure that lead poisoning, while it is a concern, does never become an epidemic in New Jersey.

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