

The Massachusetts Healthy Homes Program

Improving Housing Quality & Resident Health Now and for the Future



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People need safe and healthy environments in which to live. The presence of lead, poor indoor air quality, and other substandard housing conditions lead to developmental delays in children, respiratory disease, accidents and injuries, potential displacement, and spread of infectious disease, among other serious, preventable health consequences. The passage of this legislation will create the Massachusetts Healthy Homes Program (MHHP) Fund, to scale up the Commonwealth's efforts to address serious health problems caused by substandard housing.



Housing Quality Impacts Resident Health

- Any amount of lead in the body can hurt children's brains, kidneys, and nervous systems, slow down their growth and development, make it hard for them to learn, damage their hearing and speech, and cause behavior problems.
- Poor indoor air quality can cause respiratory and allergy symptoms and difficulty breathing and can cause asthma or make asthma symptoms worse.



Housing Quality is a Racial Equity Issue

- Black children are nearly 2.5 times more likely to have lead poisoning than white children.
- Emergency Department visits for asthma were 2.5 and 3.5 times higher for Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic children as compared to white children.
- A significantly higher proportion of residents in Gateway Cities are Black or Latinx, with the proportion in several Gateway Cities between two and four times the statewide percentage of 22.1% Black or Latinx. The incidence of lead poisoning and asthma-related hospitalizations are significantly higher in Gateway Cities.



The Massachusetts Housing Stock Needs Improvement

- Massachusetts has the second oldest housing stock in the U.S.
- More than 70% of homes in Massachusetts were constructed before lead paint was banned in 1978
- 15 of the 17 cities categorized by the MA Department of Public Health as being High Risk Communities for Childhood Lead Poisoning are Gateway Cities.
- Gateway Cities residents suffer disproportionately from asthma-related hospitalizations, with half a dozen having two to three times the statewide rate.

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The MA Healthy Homes Program will:



Equitably Address Housing Habitability Concerns at Scale

- Address a multitude of health hazards and habitability concerns including, but not limited to, asbestos, mold, pests, and lead.
- Address conditions preventing installation of measures to improve energy or water efficiency, utilize renewable energy, and lower utility costs.
- Leverage funding from, and increase coordination with, existing home repair programs.
- Increase retention in workforce development programs associated with home repairs.



Provide Flexible Funding to Meet Community Needs

- Grants and forgivable loans to eligible owner-occupants of multifamily properties.
- Loans, including deferred payment loans, to eligible investor-owners, with protections for existing tenants.
- Support technical assistance to building owners, contractors, and others to ensure successful program implementation.



Address Health Inequities Associated with Poor Housing Quality

- Focus significant funding to address lead paint, poor indoor air quality, and other problems which have a disproportionate health impact on households of color.
- Dedicate at least 50% of the funds to owners of buildings located in Gateway Cities, in recognition that Gateway Cities have a higher proportion of households of color than the State overall.
- Support outreach to minimize cultural, linguistic, or other barriers, and thereby broaden access to program resources in hard-to-reach communities.

Questions? Contact Kristina St. Cyr,
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The following organizations have indicated their support for the Massachusetts Healthy Homes Program:

Healthcare Organizations

- Baystate Health
- Boston Children's Hospital
- Beth Israel Lahey
- Mass General Brigham

Community Organizations

- Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
- Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE)
- Asian Community Development Corporation
- Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc.
- CHAPA
- Citizens' Housing and Planning Association
- Community Development Partnership
- Community Economic Development Center-New Bedford
- Disability Policy Consortium
- Fenway CDC
- Franklin County CDC
- Health Resources in Action
- Hilltown CDC
- Home City Development, Inc.
- Homeowners Rehab Inc
- LivableStreets Alliance
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- Madison Park Development Corporation
- Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance
- Metro Housing | Boston
- Metro West Collaborative Development
- Mill Cities Community Investments
- Neighborhood Works Housing Solutions
- North Shore Community Development Coalition
- Office of Planning and Economic Development City of Holyoke
- Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts
- RevitalizeCDC
- Somerville Community Corporation
- Way Finders