

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
AND KATHRYN BARGER

August 8, 2017

Supporting Screening for Childhood Lead Poisoning

Lead is a dangerous neurotoxin, and lead exposure is especially harmful to young children. It is well-documented that childhood lead poisoning can affect the brain and nervous system and lead to decreased intelligence, physical development challenges, and learning disabilities. Moreover, sustained and increased lead exposure can have serious and permanent health consequences, including seizures, coma, and even death.

In Los Angeles County, we are particularly aware of children’s vulnerability to lead exposure because of egregious polluting incidents like that in Vernon, where the now-shuttered Exide battery recycling plant spewed tons of harmful toxins into the air for decades and contaminated the soil of tens of thousands of nearby homes and properties in southeast LA County. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) tested 12,000 children living within 4.5 miles of Exide in 2012, the last year the facility was in operation, and found 285 children had elevated blood lead levels. CDPH further asserted that children living near Exide were nearly twice as likely to have high blood lead levels as children countywide.

In 1991, CDPH established the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, which created a standard of care for identifying and treating children with elevated blood lead levels and required all children on public assistance programs to have their blood tested for lead, at 12 and 24 months. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that there is no known safe blood lead concentration, and there are children that may be currently exposed to lead that are not being tested.

AB 1316 (Quirk), as most recently amended on July 3, 2017, would require

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MOTION

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CDPH to reassess the risk factors, and consider those most significant, that determine whether a child is “at risk” of elevated blood lead levels, including but not limited to:

- a child’s time spent in a home, school, or building built before 1978;
- a child’s proximity to a former lead or steel smelter or an industrial facility that historically emitted or currently emits lead;
- a child’s proximity to a freeway or heavily traveled roadway;
- other potential risk factors for lead exposure; and
- other known sources of lead contamination.

Unfortunately, the prevalence of lead in paint, dust, soil, and water means children are often exposed to this toxin but are not tested or receiving care for lead exposure. It is our responsibility to ensure that all children at greater risk of lead exposure are screened and provided proper healthcare treatment.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to send a 5-signature letter to the author, Legislative leadership, the Los Angeles County Delegation, and the Governor expressing the County’s strong support of AB 1316.

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