

December 12, 2024

Dear Mayor Bibb,

The undersigned members of the Lead Safe Advisory Board write to you today out of our shared moral obligation to truly address the lead poisoning crisis that Cleveland is facing. We believe, as we think you do, that we are at a crossroads in our work to protect Cleveland's children.

However, it has become harder to assess the next steps at this crossroad because this is our first Board meeting since the roll-out of the 2019 Lead Safe Law where we have not received any data from the administration regarding participation in the lead safe program.

After many back and forths with your staff members including Director O'Toole and Senior Advisor to the Mayor Emily Collins, what we have come to understand is the Administration was fundamentally unprepared to implement the transition from Lead Clearance Exams to Lead Risk Assessments on October 18. This change was announced four days earlier via *Executive Order 2024-03: Accelerating Progress Toward Fewer Lead Poisonings*. The change came suddenly with no prior public announcement. Not only have we heard from the lead safe workforce that this change caught them off-guard, but it now seems that the Executive Order was implemented without needed updates to city's data systems that track and monitor submissions.

At this time, your staff are unable to answer the basic question: how many property owners have submitted a Lead Risk Assessment since the Executive Order went into effect on October 18? We simply do not know this information, which we need to help guide our next steps.

We do understand that your staff are working to fix the technology issues and hope to make the full dataset available publicly in the first quarter of 2025. However, this gap in information comes at a critical time. The Administration has let the contract for a Lead Safe Auditor lapse. Without an auditor, the Board also has not been given a complete data picture of the program since the second quarter of 2024. A new Auditor has been selected but will not be on-boarded until the new year. The Administration and private partners are both openly acknowledging the need to change fundamental aspects of the program. But the scramble around basic program functions are slowing down needed next steps.

In the coming months, we need to tackle major concerns. Simply put, we need to spend the dollars allocated to this program in ways that truly protect children from poisoning. Right now, barely one third of available funding across the City and private partners has been spent, even after years of promises. And we still do not have a simple, streamlined way to replace old wood windows in a high-risk home. In the coming year, we will certainly need legislative changes to the law to make this program work better.

We remain hopeful that data issues we discussed here are resolved swiftly and reiterate our commitments to tackle the next round of critical challenges facing this program together. As we know you would say, our children deserve nothing less.