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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Councilwoman Introduces Lead Legislation Package to Protect Children

(PHILADELPHIA) October 25, 2018 – In recognition of Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in the City of Philadelphia, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown introduced five bills in a continuing effort to prevent childhood lead poisoning in Philadelphia, a city that has three times as many children with elevated blood lead levels as that of Flint, Michigan.

“Lead poisoning continues to be a chronic public health issue in the City of Philadelphia despite my initial legislation passed in 2011,” stated Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown. “This new package of bills aims to close loopholes in the current law as well as increase awareness for new parents and caregivers on the negative lifelong and damaging effects of lead exposure during childhood. No parent should have to worry about whether their home they are providing for their children is poisoning them. Lead poisoning is an issue of public health as well as economic and environmental justice.”

An estimated 95% of Philadelphia’s housing stock was built before 1978 and it is these units that are most conducive to lead poisoning. The CDC has found that populations at higher risk for lead exposure include the poor, members of racial-ethnic minority groups, recent immigrants, and persons living in older, poorly maintained rental properties.

Though rates of elevated blood lead concentration have fallen among the City’s children over the past decade, rates remain higher than the national average. According to the 2017 Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance Report issued by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, 2,615 children in the City of Philadelphia have elevated blood lead levels. According to the Department of Public Health, “certain areas of the City – particularly North Philadelphia and some parts of West and Southwest Philadelphia – experience higher rates than the rest of the City.” In some zip codes in the City, over 20% of children tested report elevated blood lead levels.

“Too many children in Philadelphia are being exposed to lead in their homes,” stated Health Commissioner Thomas Farley. “With this initiative, instead of just waiting for that to happen, the city will be getting ahead of the problem by preventing exposure in the first place. I thank Councilmember Reynolds Brown for taking this issue so seriously.”

As part of this package, Councilwoman Reynolds Brown introduced legislation to amend Title 6 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Health Code,” relating to lead paint hazards and other violations, to provide for appeal periods and for penalties, to provide for inspections and fees, to revise definitions, and to promote lead safety, all under certain terms and conditions. This legislation expands the current law to require that all rental units with the exception of those designated for college students be certified as lead-free or lead-safe. This bill also enhances transparency requirements related to lead-safe certification and stiffens penalties for those who refuse to comply.

“We at PCCY are very excited about Councilwoman’s bill to expand current lead law legislation to require that ALL rental units are lead-safe and not just those with children under the age of six living there,” stated Donna Cooper, Executive Director of Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY). “It is near impossible for the City to track whether or not a rental unit has a child under the age of six living there. Therefore,

while well-intentioned, the current law is not effective in preventing lead poisoning in children. This new legislation will protect children not only from lead poisoning in their homes, but also when they are playing at their grandparents and visiting with other friends and family.”

“The current Philadelphia Lead Ordinance requires a landlord to provide, prior to entering into a lease with a tenant family with children 6 or under who will be residing in rental property, a Lead Safe Certification. A copy must also be provided to the Department of Public Health. Most landlords do not comply with this law,” stated George Gould, Senior Attorney at Community Legal Services, Inc. “Of the estimated 22,000 families who have children 6 or under living in rental properties only about 3, 000 Certificates have been given to the Health Department.”

Councilwoman Reynolds Brown also introduced legislation to amend Chapter 6-200 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Preventive Medicine,” to establish requirements for the testing of blood lead levels in children, all under certain terms and conditions. This legislation will require children’s blood lead levels to be tested twice before the age of 30 months.

“I want to acknowledge and thank Councilwoman Reynolds Brown for introducing this very important piece of legislation at a time when the state legislature continues to debate the issue,” said Maurice Sampson, Eastern Pennsylvania Director for Clean Water Action. “Now is the time to take care of our children.”

The City of Philadelphia must lead by example. Therefore, also introduced is legislation to amend Title 16 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Public Property,” by adding a new section requiring that certain renovation projects involving City-owned or occupied buildings, or the use of City capital dollars, be certified as lead free or lead safe prior to the completion of the renovation project; all under terms and conditions. This legislation incorporates projects identified under Rebuild.

Further, Councilwoman Reynolds Brown introduced legislation to amend Chapter 9-3900 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Property Licenses and Owner Accountability,” to modify application and notice requirements, and penalties for noncompliance; all under certain terms and conditions.

This legislation requires landlords that operate as Limited Liability Corporations (LLC) to disclose the names of certain individuals with an equity interest in the corporation. Additionally, this bill requires all LLCs to identify a managing agent who is able to receive notices, orders and summonses. This aims to increase transparency and accountability of landlords to the City as well as their tenants.

Lastly, Councilwoman Reynolds Brown introduced legislation to amend Chapter 19-2600 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Business Income and Receipts Taxes,” to modify application requirements for commercial activity licenses; all under certain terms and conditions. This legislation requires commercial enterprises that operate as Limited Liability Corporations (LLC) to disclose the names of certain individuals with an equity interest in the corporation.

Lead exposure during childhood is risky and can result in health and behavioral complications for children who are exposed to dangerous amounts of lead. Heightened blood levels of lead are known to cause slowing of growth and development, behavioral problems, difficulty learning and paying attention in school, and damage to hearing and speech abilities, which are irreversible. Long term, lead poisoning can damage the nervous and cardiovascular systems and have an impact on reproductive health.

This package of bills reflects a more comprehensive approach with shared responsibilities amongst stakeholders.

For additional information, please contact Public Affairs Manager Samantha Pearson at samantha.pearson@phila.gov.

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