



CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICE

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Testimony on H.736 – An Act Relating to Lead Poisoning Prevention House Human Service Committee

William M. Ward – Burlington Director of Code Enforcement

Our office has a total of 11 staff members. – We have three primary functions which are inspecting rental housing, zoning enforcement and investigation of health complaints. As the Director I also serve as the Town Health Officer while the 5 inspectors and 3 administrators serve as Deputy Town Health Officers.

Code Enforcement Department fundamental lead compliance activities

- We inspect approximately 3,300 rental units annually and all of Burlington's 10,200 rental units every three years.
- Our inspections verify compliance with Vermont's Lead Law and Burlington's Minimum Housing Ordinances.
- Staff works in partnership with Burlington's Lead Program which is not an enforcement entity.
- We collaborate with VT Department of Health in support of lead poisoning prevention and enforcement
- In 2017 our housing inspections revealed approximately 44 percent of rental units were not in compliance with current EMP filing requirements at the time of our initial inspection.

General support and comments

- Combining the key elements of the existing state law and EPA regulations is helpful to reduce confusion and increase compliance.
- The proposed legislation should increase the likelihood of a local official stopping work practice violations before negative health consequences occur. An administrative violation after the fact will not help a child who is already lead poisoned.
- Proposed permit limitations are helpful. I understand a permit would only be required if prohibited activities are intended to be used. Most of the current EMP work I see being done by Burlington property owners or their representatives does not involve any prohibited activities.
- The limitations on chemical stripping are appropriate because the practice can be quite dangerous. I understand it will be still allowed under a renovation permit.

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- I believe the media campaign to educate the public and stakeholders will be key in successful implementation of H736. There continues to be confusion and noncompliance with the existing laws. Having different trigger levels for example will be confusing unless explained thoroughly and with simple illustrations.
- A campaign that restates the negative health effects publicly is extremely valuable since the message is still not universally understood. Damage from lead poisoning cannot be reversed so preventing it cannot be undersold.
- Training VT Town Health Officers on these changes will be an important element that I trust to the staff of the Vermont Department of health. The VDH currently provides a commendable level of training and they have valuable resources available to Town Health Officers on a wide range of topics.

Passing H736 should make the law easier to understand, result in greater compliance and ultimately fewer lead poisoned children in Vermont.