

Joint Finance Committee Democrats: Baffled by Republican objection to reducing childhood lead poisoning

Posted on Thursday, Mar 7, 2019

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MADISON, WI – The Department of Health Services (DHS) submitted a request to implement a health services initiative to reduce childhood lead poisoning in Wisconsin, through the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). With the federal matching rate at 94.56%, and hundreds of thousands of children facing exposure, the JFC Democratic members are outraged that the Republicans objected to the request.

“The bottom line is too many of our children are testing positive for high levels of lead and we need to take action to fix it,” said Senator Johnson (D-Milwaukee). “This statewide problem is proven to hurt a child’s brain and nervous system development, causing permanent damage. I am appalled that any member of the Joint Finance Committee would actively prevent our state from immediately moving forward with this critical opportunity to stop our children from being lead-poisoned.”

“Using federal dollars to improve the health of low income children and pregnant women should not be a partisan issue,” said Senator Erpenbach (D-Middleton). “The percent of Wisconsin children under the age of 6 with high levels of lead in their blood is alarming, and it is disheartening that Republicans choose to flex their newly

acquired lame-duck muscle on a program to prevent kids from being poisoned.”

“Parts of our state have higher incidences of lead poisoning of children than in Flint, MI, yet Republicans have been slow to allocate needed resources to abate the source of lead contamination,” said Representative Taylor (D-Madison). “This DHS initiative, which was objected to by an unknown Republican, is critical to keeping children healthy and safe. It is long past time to seriously address Wisconsin’s childhood lead poisoning crisis.”

“Child lead poisoning is one of the most preventable public health crises in our state,” said Representative Goyke (D-Milwaukee). “The solution is to abate the lead from environments of young children and the Department of Health Services has put forward a plan to leverage state and federal dollars to make a meaningful impact to reduce child lead poisoning. This important initiative should move forward without delay.”