

Milwaukee Ald. Dimitrijevic: SafeHomes initiative expands lead abatement efforts for a lead-free Milwaukee

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Alderwoman Marina Dimitrijevic has authored a multifaceted 2021 budget amendment to significantly address lead abatement efforts to help better protect Milwaukee children from lead poisoning.

As part of a larger budget amendment sponsored by many council members, the **SafeHomes Lead Abatement Initiative** increases lead abatement and lead hazard inspection capabilities in the Milwaukee Health Department and the Department of Neighborhood Services.

Alderwoman Dimitrijevic, chairwoman of the Public Safety and Health Committee, said her amendment would fund SafeHomes using \$500,000 in Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) resources. She said the amendment will create a new lead abatement program focused on owner occupied dwellings, in the Health Department, and participants in the program will work with city-approved contractors.

The Health Department has estimated that about 37 dwelling units could be abated with the total \$1 million in capital abatement funding – this would include an existing \$500,000 in funding and the \$500,000 added via Alderwoman Dimitrijevic’s amendment.

“Sadly, a large number of properties across Milwaukee contain lead exposure threats from water and from surfaces that contain lead-based paints,” Alderwoman

Dimitrijevic said, adding that the initiative is slated to be included as part of a larger “omnibus” 2021 amendment sponsored by **Alderman Michael J. Murphy** (chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee) and primary cosponsor Common Council **President Cavalier Johnson**.

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Budget Amendment/ADD ONE

“The SafeHomes initiative aims to specifically prioritize properties where there are children under six years of age who have elevated blood lead levels, providing owner occupants with helpful partial subsidies for the abatement of lead paint and lead water services. With children and families spending a significantly increased time inside during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical for us to focus on doing everything we can to abate lead hazards and to protect young children with elevated blood levels who are at highest risk for developmental and behavior problems, as well as permanent damage to the brain and nervous system. Every child deserves to live in a lead free Milwaukee and we must do all we can to make this happen,” she said.

Other cosponsors of the omnibus amendment include **Alderwoman Dimitrijevic, Alderman José G. Pérez, Alderman Robert J. Bauman, Alderman Mark A. Borkowski, Alderman Nik Kovac, Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, and Alderwoman JoCasta Zamarripa**.

The Finance and Personnel Committee will take up Council amendments to the 2021 budget when it meets at 9 a.m. this Thursday (October 29). The committee’s deliberations will continue on Friday, October 30 if needed.

Thursday’s virtual meeting will be televised live on the City Channel (channel 25 on Spectrum Cable and channel 99 on AT&T U-Verse in the City of Milwaukee) and via streaming video on the city website at city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25.