

Freshwater for Life Action Coalition, Get the Lead Out Coalition: Statement regarding Milwaukee Health Dept. lead mismanagement

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MILWAUKEE, WI – Freshwater for Life Action Coalition (FLAC) and The Get The Lead Out Coalition believe that it is long overdue for our community to take seriously the removal of the toxic lead infrastructure which continues to harm our community. We must also remove the toxic political elements which allow this issue to persist. Recent statements made by City of Milwaukee Alderman Nik Kovac raise very serious concerns as to the local government's lack of understanding regarding this issue. Alderman Kovac's statement that "removing lead pipes probably won't have an impact on public health" is an uninformed statement and is simply wrong. In 2015, the Lead and Copper Rule Working Group issued a report to the National Drinking Water Advisory Council and recommended to have "lead service line replacement a top priority rather than a last resort and to better manage systems and pipes in the interim. The ultimate goal is to replace all lead service lines" ([Report](#) here).

The recent [press release](#) by some members of the Common Council is far too little and far too late. The latest family harmed by incompetence and neglect is nothing new here. Years have passed and we are still waiting for an explanation for the past failures. We are also waiting on a plan to be developed to remove this toxin from our community. Our local government has lost trust and credibility on this issue. They have lied to us too many times and continue to harm our community through concerted inaction, a lack of concern for the science behind sources of lead toxicity, and through allocation of funds to large development near downtown rather than the prioritizing of public health, public education and infrastructure. The poisoning of our community can no longer be seen as due to mere

incompetence or mistakes. It has become clear that the city is intentionally poisoning children. This is not a hyperbolic statement. There is no other logical explanation for this behavior. City leaders have had numerous chances to fix their procedures in order to protect our children but have chosen not to. Clearly their preference is to poison the community as opposed to protect us. The government has proven this time and again.

This same Common Council has members, like Alderman Kovac, spreading disinformation in local media, creating false narratives about “lead vs. paint,” and speculating, without scientific data, about which form of lead is harming our community more. Alderman Kovac is breaking ranks with President Biden and Governor Evers in a city littered with aging lead infrastructure. As city after city chooses to move forward and address the issue of lead poisoning, Milwaukee’s lethargy and reluctance to take action stands out.

It pains us to learn of another family affected by this nefarious toxin. It is important to always remember the human cost behind this City’s inaction and ineptitude. Our coalition publicly testified about the risks of lead infrastructure as it relates to lead laterals in Bay View. The links are [here](#). None of this is new information to members of our Common Council. Reactive press releases are not enough. They are smoke and mirrors that distract us from the ever-pressing need for an actual plan for removal.

Moreover, there continues to be no resolution to the criminal investigation that was passed from Milwaukee DA Chisolm to the Attorney General of Wisconsin. The community demands answers and transparency. An internal audit is unacceptable, given the government’s history of misinformation, inaction, and misunderstanding of lead poisoning in our city.

Lastly, it is imperative the City of Milwaukee come up with a proactive, publicly funded plan to remove toxic lead from our community (whether from paint, soil or pipes). Our volunteer coalition has written such a plan which our own political leadership cannot muster the energy to create and implement themselves. Our ideas for a comprehensive plan for lead removal are linked [here](#). The Common Council must show us that they care about this issue and its citizenry beyond emotional pleading press releases. Without a plan to remove this toxin once and for all, we will continue to be harmed by this toxic lead and the toxic politics that allows this harm to persist. Get The Lead Out!

The Get The Lead Out Coalition & Freshwater for Life Action Coalition (FLAC)