



*Testimony before the Public Health Committee  
Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH  
March 7, 2022*

Good morning, Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Deidre S. Gifford, and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

I am pleased to appear before you today to offer remarks on one of the bills on today's agenda.

**H.B. 5045 - AN ACT REDUCING LEAD POISONING.**

The Department supports this bill because it will allow the state to improve and expedite the detection of high lead levels and will also enable the state to provide additional services to assist children and their families exposed to high lead levels. High lead levels can result in significant health problems for children, including brain and nervous system damage, hampered growth, and problems with learning and development. These problems affect not only the children exposed to lead, but also their families and communities.

Section 4 of the bill directs DSS to explore the addition of services to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (i.e., HUSKY B) to help address, within available appropriations, the health impacts of high lead blood levels for children served by these programs. As federally required by the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) services benefit under Medicaid, DSS already covers blood lead screening tests at specified intervals performed in pediatrician offices as part of periodic child well visits for Medicaid members. Based on our research and including a survey of approaches taken by other states, DSS is currently evaluating additional services that may be appropriate to add to the Medicaid program to help children with high blood levels. Those services may include coverage of targeted case management to assist families affected by lead exposure to access necessary services and may also include payment for lead inspection services provided by qualified professionals. Medicaid reimbursement for inspections and case management will help to offset costs to local municipalities. As is standard for considering additions to the Medicaid program, DSS will publish public notice of any proposed changes to the Medicaid State Plan and will consider public and stakeholder comments and input.

DSS supports the passage of this bill.