



2639 S La Cienega Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90034
(310) 204-6010
Fax (310) 204-0891
www.healthlaw.org



617 S. Olive Street, Suite 810
Los Angeles, CA 90014-1629
Phone 213-689-9170
Fax 213-689-9199
Email lainfo@psrla.org
www.psrla.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 14, 2008

MEDIA CONTACT

Martha Dina Argüello
(310) 261-0073

MEDIA CONTACT:

Manjusha P. Kulkarni
(310) 204-6010 x.104

California Assembly Passes Bill to Test Children for Toxic Lead Poisoning from Toys and Home Exposure

Governor Urged to Sign Legislation to Protect More than Half a Million at-Risk Kids

SACRAMENTO --- The California State Assembly approved SB 775, The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act of 2007, to ensure that 640,000 at-risk children get tested for lead poisoning. The bill passed with a 45-29 Assembly vote. The legislation will now go to the Senate for concurrence and then will be in the hands of the Governor.

“This bill will give parents an important tool in protecting their children from lead poisoning,” says Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA) Executive Director Martha Dina Argüello. PSR-LA is a co-sponsor of SB 775.

Emily Spitzer, Executive Director of NHeLP, a bill co-sponsor, stated, “Lead poisoning causes irreversible harm to children, such as learning disabilities and developmental delays. This bill is critical to ensuring that California’s at-risk children get tested and families get the information they need to prevent lead poisoning. We hope that the Governor stands up for California’s children by signing this bill.”

Lead poisoning is a pervasive health problem in California, with more than 640,000 children at high risk from exposure in their homes, from toys and other sources. Over 8 million homes, apartments and condominiums in the state contain lead paint, ranking California third in the nation for number of homes that still pose a health threat for small children and their families. Additional sources of lead include drinking water, soil, candy, toys, pottery, cosmetics and home health remedies and ethnic medicines.

“With more and more reports regarding lead being found in toys and other consumer products, we must be diligent about ensuring that vulnerable children are screened and tested. We must also do a better job of educating their guardians about the health risk involved,” said Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas, author of the legislation.

SB 775 strengthens existing regulations by requiring all children in public programs to be tested for lead poisoning and requires physicians to inform pregnant women about lead hazards and where to obtain helpful information. Currently, only 1 in 5 children enrolled in Medi-Cal and the Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) Program receives a blood lead test, despite state and federal mandates.

The bill also requires the State Department of Public Health to include pertinent information about lead poisoning prevention on its Web site and publish an annual report to the Legislature and the public on its effectiveness in preventing lead poisoning of California’s children, including information on state screening rates and elevated blood lead level rates.

In addition to PSR-LA and NHeLP, this legislation is supported by dozens of health and environmental organizations.

####

PSR-LA: Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles was founded in 1980 as a local affiliate of the national organization, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). The organization is committed to reducing threats to public health related to nuclear weapons and environmental degradation. The Los Angeles chapter is the largest in the nation, and has played a leading role in national, state, and local education and policy efforts. In 1985, PSR shared the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War for building public awareness and pressure to end the nuclear arms race.

NHeLP: The National Health Law Program is a national public interest law firm that seeks to improve health care for America’s working and unemployed poor, minorities, the elderly and people with disabilities. NHeLP serves legal services programs, community-based organizations, the private bar, providers and individuals who work to preserve a health care safety net for the millions of uninsured or underinsured low-income people.