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MAYOR

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HB 563

February 12, 2020

TO: Members of the House Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 563 – Income Tax - Lead Remediation Credit
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 563.

HB 563 allows an individual or a corporation to claim a state income tax credit for certain costs incurred for approved lead hazard-reduction projects.

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) combats childhood lead poisoning through a number of means including medical case management of lead poisoned children, environmental inspections of homes with lead hazards and enforcement of applicable laws, prosecution of noncompliant property owners, intensive primary-prevention home-visiting, health education and outreach, and referrals of families to lead abatement programs.

Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that can have debilitating effects on people of all ages. In particular, it can severely compromise the behavioral and cognitive development of children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that over 4 million households nationwide have children exposed to lead. Every child deserves to grow up free from the permanent harm lead exposure can cause; unfortunately, lead hazards in homes remain a serious threat.

HB 563 would incentivize property owners to address lead hazards and keep children safe. BCHD acknowledges that safe and healthy housing is an important determinant of health, and substandard housing is a major public health issue. Children

should be safe in their homes, yet too many older homes in Baltimore City contain hidden lead hazards that can cause children needless and lasting harm.

Unfortunately, a frequent concern heard by BCHD regarding lead remediation is that the process is very cost- and resource- intensive for individual homeowners. Strict state and local regulations, however, do not afford said homeowners with latitude regarding the remediation process, often resulting in abandoned or poor remediation efforts. Altogether, the tax credit included in HB 563 would provide an additional, much-needed incentive for lower income homeowners and small business operators to remove lead hazards.

For the above reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on HB 563.