Elevator pitch

“The Flint water crisis led to an entire city being exposed to unsafe levels of lead. But even before the Flint crisis thousands of children across Michigan were lead poisoned each year. Lead is a potent neurotoxin that is linked to a loss of IQ points, and behavior problems like ADHD. This is a statewide public health crisis. Thousands of children in Michigan have elevated blood lead levels. We can prevent lead poisoning by remediating lead hazards in our homes and communities. It’s time for lawmakers in Lansing to commit to ending lead poisoning in our state.”

**Lead is a big problem for Michigan**

* **The crisis in Flint highlights just how urgent the need is to address the legacy of lead in the pipes that bring water into our homes, the paint on our walls, and the soil in our own backyards.**
* Lead poisoning is ENTIRELY preventable
* Michigan is one of the worst states in the country in terms of lead poisoned kids
* **In 2016 at least 5,521 Michigan kids were lead poisoned. That number is likely higher since many children are still not tested. This is an increase over 2015, but more children were tested and thereby identified for abatement, case management and other services.**
* **The statewide percentage of kids identified to have elevated blood lead levels increased from 2015 (3.4%) to 2016 (3.6%).**
* Many communities in Michigan have alarmingly high percentages of lead poisoned children.
* **In 2016, Jackson, Saint Joseph and Calhoun counties ranked as the three counties with the highest percentage of children under age six with an EBLL, with 7.6%, 6.4% and 6.4%, respectively. More children under age six were tested and had an EBLL in Detroit than any county in Michigan with 8.8% EBLL.**
* Lead poisoning is an urban AND a rural problem with over 70% of Michigan’s housing stock built before 1978 when lead paint was banned and because of our aging water infrastructure and history of heavy industry in the state.

**Health and societal impacts**

* There is no safe level of lead according to the American Academy of Pediatrics
* Estimates show a 4-7 point decrease in IQ for every 10 ug/dL increase in blood lead levels.
* Lead exposure is linked to: hypertension, hearing loss, osteoporosis, anemia, tooth decay, Parkinson’s, ADHD, kidney damage, reproductive issues and many other diseases and disorders.
* Pregnant women exposed to lead have more spontaneous abortions, low birth weight babies, still births, and babies suffering from lead poisoning at birth.
* 21.1% of ADHD cases are associated with elevated BLLs
* High lead levels are associated with aggression, hyperactive, and bullying behavior in Children.
* 15% of adult crime has been associated with lead exposure and 10% of juvenile delinquency.

**Economic impacts**

* In 2016 a report compared the costs of lead poisoning in Michigan to the cost to remediating lead paint-based exposures. The report used 2014 data collected by Michigan’s Department of Community Health.
* The report estimated the cost of lead poisoning in Michigan to be more than $270 million per year.
  + More than half of this ($170 million) is lost lifetime earnings, followed by increased costs of:
    - Crime – juvenile and adult crimes related to lead (over $80 million)
    - Healthcare – ($18 million)
    - Special education – ($2.5 million)
* Cost to taxpayers from lead poisoning every year is $112.5 million (special education, lost income tax, judicial system, etc.)
* The estimated cost to remediate 100,000 of the most at-risk homes in Michigan would be $600 million.
* That means remediating these at risk homes would pay for itself in just over 3 years – that’s astonishing.
* **Not only is lead abatement a critical public health investment for our future, it also makes economic sense.**

**Policy Priorities**

**1)** **Universal Lead Testing for ALL Michigan kids aged 1 & 2**.  Currently, only Medicaid children, children who are screened and referred by their pediatrician and kids living in a targeted lead community are lead tested.  Many kids fall through the cracks in this system.  **As a result, only about 20% of all Michigan kids are actually lead tested each year.** A universal testing requirement is simple and clear for families and healthcare providers and will help ensure children get the support and services they need.

**2)** **Shift the Burden of Proof to Landlords to Submit Documentation Proving They Made their Home Lead Safe after a Child Has Been Poisoned in their Unit and Fixing /disclose lead risk before renting.** Many kids in Michigan are lead poisoned in rental units.  There is high turnover rate of these rental units meaning multiple families can be poisoned each year with the cycle continuing. It is estimated that up to 80% of lead poisoned kids in Detroit and Flint were poisoned in a rental unit.  In Grand Rapids, the estimate is 60% of lead impacted kids were poisoned in a rental unit.  A focus on making sure rental units are safe for kids is critical to end lead poisoning in Michigan.  Where local prosecutors stand ready to hold landlords accountable for poisoning a child in their property, we should support those efforts by making sure the burden of proof is where it belongs, with the landlord.

**3)** **Require a Lead Test at Sale or Transfer Of Property.**While there is a lead disclosure form that home buyers can review before purchase, much of the time the lead status is "unknown" because no actual lead testing has been done.  Because most kids are lead poisoned by their homes, it is crucial that we make sure their homes are lead safe BEFORE they move in.  Since close to 78% of Michigan Housing stock could have lead paint, this requirement is even more important as a primary prevention tool to stop lead poisoning BEFORE it happens.

# 4) Fund the $60 million supplemental budget request for filtered drinking water stations in schools and childcare and require schools to install the devices.

# 5) Fully fund the budget requests for the lead abatement work done by the MI Department of Health and Human Services and restore the $1.25 million for the Lead Commission.