



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

‘The New Flint’: Scathing report on NYCHA compares crisis to Michigan’s failures, surveys NYCHA residents on lead problems

DIANE J. SAVINO February 27, 2018

IDC proposes comprehensive package of legislation to address major crisis facing NYCHA tenants

New York, NY — The Independent Democratic Conference on Monday released a bombshell report, “[The New Flint](#),” comparing the lead crisis facing tenants of the New York City Housing Authority with the lead crisis that captivated a nation in Flint, Michigan. Along with a new survey of NYCHA residents on lead paint, the senators also unveiled a comprehensive package of legislation to protect residents from the failures of the Authority.

NYCHA houses 396,581 authorized residents nearly four times as many people as the city of Flint, Michigan with a population of 98,900. Despite the size of its population, the Authority’s admission of its failure to follow the law, no real action has been taken to cure the problems facing NYCHA tenants.

Alarming, despite NYCHA Chairwoman Shola Olatoye’s admission that lead paint inspection certifications were falsified, residents reported through an IDC survey that problems persist:

- 79% of residents said NYCHA did nothing when lead paint was discovered in their apartments

- 80% had children whose children's blood-lead levels have not been tested
- 54% called NYCHA for repairs, but are still waiting in excess of a month for repairs
- 63% indicate their apartment has peeling or chipped paint
- Over 82% said NYCHA did nothing to educate them about lead paint

"NYCHA is the new Flint, and we need to step up and protect tenants from the negligence of the Authority. Residents are in serious danger, especially children, if we do not take action now. The Independent Democratic Conference today unveiled a legislative package to protect nearly 400,000 tenants from the consistent mismanagement they face," said Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

"Every child growing up in NYCHA housing deserves to be free from lead poisoning. Every parent raising a family in NYCHA housing deserves to know that their apartment is not poisoning them. As someone who grew up in NYCHA housing myself, I know it is our duty to ensure NYCHA lives up to its responsibilities to every NYCHA resident. 'The New Flint' report we release today outlines the public health menace NYCHA created by its failures. Today, I stand with colleagues in advancing steps to combat these dangers – the serious danger a developmental neurotoxin poses to our community's children. Today, I stand with colleagues to restore peace of mind to these families. And today, I stand with colleagues to ensure this type of crisis is never repeated," said Senator Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn).

"This survey indicates what we have been hearing around the City from the 400,000 NYCHA residents daily: action is desperately needed. No parent should live in fear that their young child has been exposed to lead paint in the home, especially if we are unable to grasp how widespread the severity of this failure on NYCHA's behalf," said Senator Diane Savino (D-SI/Brooklyn).

“Considering the more than 400,000 people who live in NYCHA apartments and the falsification of lead inspection reports by NYCHA officials, it is entirely justified to compare the situation to that of Flint, Michigan. The inhabitants of NYCHA have a right to know when lead is found in their homes and the administration of NYCHA has a responsibility to comprehensively track and quickly deal with any lead problems. Lead poisoning is irreversible and lifelong, and we owe it to New York’s families to empower them to protect their children from the scourge of lead paint,” said Senator Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan).

“NYCHA residents should not be treated as second class citizens. I was alarmed when news reports surfaced indicating that the City had stopped inspecting lead-paint presence in their housing units, putting people’s lives in danger. In fact, according to published reports, NYCHA residents were exposed to lead paint. This is inconceivable. We must ensure NYCHA tenants are protected from lead paint exposure and other hazards,” said Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens).

“It is shameful that the Mayor and the City of New York would put the health of so many people in danger but it is an absolute disgrace that the City would struggle to do the bare minimum to remedy any of the problems. When 79% of people respond to a survey saying that the City knew that lead paint was present in their home but did nothing about it, you have a very serious crisis on your hands. Our City cannot continue to put over 170,000 New York families living in NYCHA buildings in hazardous conditions and not answer to anybody. That is why I am proud to stand with my IDC colleagues to propose real solutions that will protect vulnerable children and give tenants across the City a voice,” said Senator Tony Avella (D-Queens)

“I know firsthand the deplorable conditions that far too many NYCHA residents face on a daily basis. Nobody has highlighted the lead-based paint, heating and mold issues that plague our developments more than Senator Klein and the IDC. I commend these common-

sense proposals brought forth today that can affect real change and improve the quality of life for all NYCHA residents," said Monique Johnson, President of Throggs Neck Resident Council.

"NYCHA needs both an infusion of money and oversight that ensures NYCHA residents that funds will be properly utilized to fix our homes so that these buildings are available to the next generation of New Yorkers. These bills start that process by allowing residents to access 311 to report repairs to HPD and oversight for money investments." said Maria Pacheco (UPACA 6 resident, member Community Voices Heard).

Over the years, the IDC issued numerous reports exposing NYCHA as the "city's worst landlord," showing problems with mold remediation, leaking roofs and peeling paint. The IDC lead the charge to invest \$100 million, the first state funding in nearly a decade, to pay for serious repairs. But, the neglect continued without any transparency or oversight of the agency's officials.

These problems will only be exacerbated by federal cuts to HUD and public housing authorities. In New York this could translate to a \$466 million loss in operating funds for NYCHA and \$346 million less from HUD's budget.

The IDC laid out a package of legislation to clean-up NYCHA's act and protect tenants:

- Requiring 311 to accept NYCHA complaints - Currently NYHCA complaints are fielded directly by NYCHA and there is no public record or accountability. Requiring 311 to take and track complaints would provide transparency and allow residents to better track action.

- An Independent NYCHA Monitor - Now more than ever, it is clear that NYCHA cannot be left to oversee its own operations. An independent NYCHA Monitor would be a watchdog who would ensure money invested in public housing is spent appropriately and report to the state.
- City Council oversight - The New York City Council should be empowered to get the information they seek from NYCHA when their members request it.
- The Repair Certificate Program - With buildings in dire need of repair, we need experienced developers to make quality, expedited fixes. In exchange experts would receive zoning bonuses for other projects.
- Lead Based Paint Reports - This legislation would require NYCHA to submit lead based paint reports to the legislature, which would include valuable information on lead paint inspections by the authority.
- Property tax abatements for lead removal - This legislation incentivizes the removal of lead paint from buildings by providing owners with a tax abatement to keep their tenants safe.
- Mandatory lead screening for children - This legislation would require children to be screened for lead when they enter kindergarten, second or fourth grade.
- Follow-ups for children who test for elevated blood levels - Primary care physicians would be required to conduct follow-up tests to monitor blood lead levels if a child tests for elevated lead levels. In addition, the state must ensure there is a full environmental review of the child's home if elevated blood lead levels are found.

The Occupant Protection Plan - Buildings inspected between 2012 and 2018 would have to be re-inspected for lead paint. All buildings constructed in 1978 or earlier would have to develop plans to protect occupants from the hazards of lead paint.