



## Cleveland Clinic and City of Cleveland Announce Donation to Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition

**Cleveland (Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022)** – Today, Mayor Justin Bibb, Council President Blaine A. Griffin, Cleveland Clinic CEO and President Tom Mihaljevic, M.D., and August Napoli, United Way of Greater Cleveland's President and CEO and Lead Safe Coalition steering committee member made a major funding announcement toward ensuring Cleveland homes are lead safe.

The Cleveland Clinic is providing \$50 million over five years to the Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition and the city, with council approval, is providing \$17 million over two years from American Rescue Plan Act funds to the coalition.

In July 2019, Cleveland City Council passed the Lead Safe Certification law to address childhood lead poisoning and Cleveland's aging housing stock. Now a national model, the law requires that all residential rental units constructed before 1978 be proactively certified as lead safe by no later than March 1, 2023.

The Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition is a public-private partnership with more than 500 members representing over 120 organizations with the same common goal – to ensure that no child is lead poisoned. Through their Lead Safe Home Fund, the Coalition provides landlords with loans, grants, and incentives to make properties lead safe and assist in getting their needed certificates. They also train residents and others to inspect and remediate lead in homes. The Lead Safe Home Fund assists, educates, and engages families, homeowners, and landlords through the Lead Safe Resource Center.

To date, the coalition has raised about \$47.3 million for the Lead Safe Home Fund. The city and the Cleveland Clinic announcement today will bring the Fund to approximately \$115 million, enough funding to ensure that all rental homes built before 1978 are lead safe as well as expand its work to more quickly, comprehensively, and definitively address the impact of lead poisoning in Cleveland. The additional funding will now allow the Coalition to more deeply assist homeowners, assist families facing displacement due to lead poisoning, create a national model for lead safe child care, improve lead screening and testing rates, train additional lead safe workers, and address other health concerns in Cleveland's housing stock.

"By protecting the health and future of our kids, we are protecting the health and future of Cleveland," stated Mayor Bibb. "This is one example of what we can accomplish through the power of collaboration and this investment is one step closer in helping Cleveland become a safer, healthier, and more equitable city."

When the legislation was passed, Council President Griffin noted that this would need to be a community effort and that the city of Cleveland could not do this alone. And unfortunately, the pandemic has impacted the effort, especially landlords and tenants, in ensuring all rental homes have lead safe certificates by 2023. With a major infusion of funding, the effort will be ramped up and expanded.

“My conversations with Dr. Mihaljevic started when he came to Cleveland to lead the Clinic,” Councilman Griffin said. “He understood what the Clinic meant to the Fairfax neighborhood and he understood how lead poisoned children take those neurological impairments into adulthood.”

Nearly 90% of Cleveland homes were built before 1978, the year that residential lead paint was outlawed. Lead poisoning is a public health crisis with a housing solution. This is why the city, Cuyahoga County, the state of Ohio, foundations, hospitals, private sector companies, and more have contributed to the Lead Safe Home Fund.

“United Way and the entire Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition have done formidable work towards making Cleveland rentals lead safe and the city has supported the coalition’s work. I’m proud we’re doing more to support it,” said Council President Griffin. “I can’t thank the Cleveland Clinic enough for the major funding they are providing. Being able to provide homeowners with additional support, is vital for the city, and will help with the issue of housing instability. The funding will be transformational. Now the hard work begins.”

Upon becoming Cleveland Clinic president and CEO in 2017, Tom Mihaljevic, M.D., made a commitment that Cleveland Clinic would do its part to create healthy communities. In 2022, the health system is making lead poisoning prevention its top community priority.

“This effort is critical because prevention is the only effective approach. There is no cure and no way to reverse the damage of lead poisoning once it is done,” Dr. Mihaljevic said. “I want Cleveland to be safe for all children, and I know this is a problem we can solve. Our communities can only be safe and healthy when every person has the opportunity to live in a safe and healthy home.”

On behalf of the Coalition, United Way of Greater Cleveland will serve as the steward for Cleveland Clinic’s investment in the Lead Safe Home Fund. The coalition will also provide an annual report sharing progress made towards bringing about a lead safe Cleveland.

“Every day, four children in Cleveland are poisoned by lead, robbing them of the ability to reach their full potential,” said Napoli, “United Way of Greater Cleveland knows the factors that keep people in poverty include access to affordable, stable and safe housing.” He continues, “As a trusted partner, we are honored to steward Cleveland Clinic’s historic investment in the community. This is a remarkable example of the power of collaboration among government, corporate and community leaders and demonstrates what can happen when a community rallies together to solve problems that were once considered insurmountable.”

#### *About Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition*

The Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition is an inclusive, public-private partnership founded to address lead poisoning. This approach protects Cleveland’s children by merging smart, adaptable public policies; knowledgeable agencies willing to

collaborate; proven community programs and leaders; and public and private sector accountability. With community voice embedded in all aspects, the Coalition is working on: 1) Supporting and measuring the City of Cleveland's Lead Safe Certificate system, 2) Developing a lead safe workforce, 3) Rolling out a public awareness campaign, 4) Advocating for state and federal lead safe policies and resources, 5) Securing investments into the Lead Safe Home Fund, and 6) Launching the Lead Safe Resource Center (administered by Environmental Health Watch) and Home Loans and Grants (administered by CHN Housing Partners). Today, the Coalition has over 500 members and six working committees and continues to grow. Website: [www.leadSAFEcle.org](http://www.leadSAFEcle.org) Email: [info@leadSAFEcle.org](mailto:info@leadSAFEcle.org) Social Media: @LeadSafeCLE, #LeadSafeCLE

#### *About United Way of Greater Cleveland*

Founded in 1913, United Way of Greater Cleveland is a local, independent nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting poverty across the Greater Cleveland area. The largest private-sector investor of health and human services, United Way invests in efforts that address poverty using a two-pronged approach. The first prong focuses on the daily issues affecting those living in poverty, the Community Hub for Basic Needs. The second drives research and innovation through the Impact Institute, a think tank with an action plan, focused on identifying long-term solutions to break the cycle of poverty. For more information, visit [unitedwaycleveland.org](http://unitedwaycleveland.org).

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