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NYCHA ANNOUNCES SWEEPING CHANGES TO OVERHAUL OPERATIONS

Changes Include: Installing a First-Ever Compliance Department, Creating Lead Expert Advisory Committee, and Multiple Personnel Actions

NEW YORK —Today, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) announced immediate and long-term corrective actions to fix the gaps in lead compliance and improve resident health. The Authority is establishing a new compliance department to oversee NYCHA’s regulatory compliance, engaging a team of lead experts, and continuing its comprehensive lead hazard overhaul. Additionally, the severity of this situation required immediate action, two senior executives resigned and one was demoted and suspended.

“The 1 in 14 NYC residents who live in public housing deserve to live in safe, clean and connected homes,” said **NYCHA Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye**. “Their safety and health is paramount. We launched a wave of lead inspections immediately when we identified this problem in 2016, and today we can announce more steps we’re taking to protect our residents. As part of a systematic overhaul, two senior executives resigned and one was demoted and suspended. Our residents deserve better and we will continue to implement changes at every level of the Authority.”

“The large majority of lead poisoning cases are found in private housing, not in NYCHA,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “That being said, one case of lead poisoning is one too many, that is why we remain committed to working actively to test children, and inspect and abate any potential lead hazards to further reduce the risk of lead poisoning in NYCHA properties and in communities around the City.”

NYCHA has engaged with the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York throughout its investigation, and further reforms will result from those discussions going forward.

Accountability – Personnel Actions

The severity of this situation required immediate action. Two senior executives resigned today and one was demoted and suspended.

Oversight – New NYCHA Compliance Department

For the first time in its history, NYCHA will create an Executive Compliance Department. The Chief Compliance Officer will be responsible for oversight of NYCHA's regulatory compliance. This Executive will be responsible for the compliance training for NYCHA's employees and the accuracy of external reporting by NYCHA. Additionally, this Executive will create a new venue for employee and resident complaints regarding compliance issues. NYCHA's new Chief Compliance Officer will report directly to the Chair.

Action – Fixing the Issue

Starting in May 2016, NYCHA conducted lead-based paint visual inspections of apartments housing children under the age of 6 where the presence of lead-based paint may exist. Upon completion, NYCHA had inspected **4,232 apartments** and made paint corrections in **2,363 apartments**. Each of those apartments will be inspected again by the end of 2017.

Expertise – Lead & Health Experts

NYCHA will engage leading experts in the environmental health field specializing in lead issues. They will advise the NYCHA Chair and General Manager on how to immediately improve lead compliance and create a long-term plan focused on resident health, and ensuring the Authority is lead safe. In order to improve resident communication and create full transparency, the lead and health experts will provide routine updates to resident and community leadership, in addition to regularly publishing updates for the public.

Actions Taken July 2016 to August 2017

- Engaged in creating a data-driven asset management and work order system. This tool is essential to accurately identify each apartment where the use of lead-based paint has not been ruled out.
- Drafted a new Lead Safe Housing Procedure and is currently working to operationalize the draft procedure.
- Budgeted and procured a contractor to inspect the remaining apartments where the presence of lead-based paint may exist.
- Created a lead-based paint inspection module on its handheld system to assist with the efficiency and accuracy of recording inspections.
- Reviewed local regulations and regulations from multiple federal agencies, which legislate NYCHA's lead-based paint activities, including new 2017 HUD regulation changes, to ensure that its policies and procedures are up-to-date.

Reforms Implemented September 2017 to Present

- Trained the lead-based inspection contractor on the use of its handheld system and the specialized lead-based paint inspection module.
- Communicated with each resident scheduled for a lead-based paint inspection in 2017 so they would know what to expect.
- Conducting inspections of apartments housing children under the age of 6 where the presence of lead-based paint has not been ruled out.
- Currently providing EPA lead-safe certification training to staff and is procuring a contractor to provide additional training to NYCHA staff in 2018.

“NYCHA is taking steps in the right direction toward righting its substantial errors in lead inspections. Accountability and oversight are critical to the day-to-day operation of any major organization. Our city’s public housing residents deserve a top-notch compliance team that they can trust to be attentive, disciplined, honest, and painstaking in their work. The actions NYCHA have undertaken in apartments with children under the age of six are important, as evidenced by the significant number of units that required paint corrections. I expect the agency to now go further to expeditiously correct the lead-based paint issues in every one of its apartments, developing a clear action plan that utilizes emergency procurement measures, if necessary. I look forward to working in partnership with Chair Olatoye on these efforts that prioritize tenant health and safety. Additionally, I renew my call for the State to fully invest in our public housing stock,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“As Chair of the Assembly’s Housing Committee, I believe that Chair Olatoye has taken action to improve accountability and oversight. I am confident that under the Chair’s leadership NYCHA will develop a long-term plan to address the lead issue and ensure that the health of residents in NYCHA housing is vigorously protected moving forward,” said **Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz**.

“My district has more than 10% of NYCHA developments, more than any other Senate district, and so this issue disproportionately affects my constituents. I am glad to see that the New York City Housing Authority is taking the necessary steps to make sure this never happens again. Shola Olatoye and her team have my full support as they navigate this situation,” said **State Senator Brian Benjamin**.

“As a product of NYCHA and an elected official, I have spent a career working to make sure that all residents feel safe in their homes and communities” said **State Senator Kevin Parker**. “For this reason I am pleased to see that Chair Olatoye has put forth an aggressive plan to ensure that lead inspections are done properly. I look forward to the day when lead is no longer an issue that we have to worry about in New York City, but until that day comes I will make sure that government agencies do what is necessary keep our communities safe”

“There is no question that it is unacceptable that NYCHA neglected to inspect 55,000 units for lead paint and then misrepresented its efforts to pass compliance. There is no excuse for falling short on such a critical responsibility, such as securing the safety and wellbeing of its residents,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “That being said, I strongly believe that demonstrating accountability is one of the most important qualities that leaders in government need to exhibit in times of crisis. NYCHA is taking responsibility for these egregious errors and has removed those

responsible from their positions. NYCHA is putting a plan in place to address the situation that prioritizes the health of its residents and employees as they inspect and correct issues in the units. Recently, I have seen NYCHA working to address decades of neglect despite the lack of resources from the federal government, so I support NYCHA as they take the necessary steps to swiftly rectify this wrong. The need to address hazardous health conditions and to increase accountability within the Authority does not end here. We will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the health and safety of New Yorkers living in public housing is protected. This is our first priority.”

“As the Assembly Member representing the second largest concentration of NYCHA residents, it is critical to me that anything negatively impacting the quality of life of our residents and all New Yorkers is responded to immediately. While the initial lead testing reports are concerning, it is important for leaders to acknowledge the situation and move forward to do everything possible to help the people of The Bronx and across New York City, which is what I commend Shola Olatoye and the NYCHA team for doing today.,” said **Assemblymember Michael Blake**. “The plan proposed by NYCHA is comprehensive, thorough, and shows that Shola is a leader who can endure difficult moments and transition in a positive direction for the benefit of the people. Let us together move forward to immediately ensure the health and security of residents while turning this challenge into an opportunity to make progress for all of the residents of NYCHA.”

“As someone who has experience with lead paint remediation and inspections, I know that this is a very serious health issue for children and other vulnerable residents” said **Assemblymember Maritza Davila**. “I am glad to see that NYCHA finally has a plan in place that will allow residents to be informed and educated about the current remediation efforts throughout New York City. I look forward to working with NYCHA on this plan and other issues relating to public housing”

“Under Shola Olatoye's leadership, NYCHA, despite inadequate Federal funding, has moved to be more responsive to tenants. Residents and community leaders in western queens have confidence that the reforms she has proposed will fix the problems that have been identified,” said **Assemblymember Cathy Nolan**. “I will continue to support proper procedures and modernization efforts by NYCHA and work closely with the chairwoman's team to insure the safety if all our people.”

“I applaud the New York City Housing Authority and Chair Shola Olatoye on recognizing the severity of the failures outlined in this week’s Department of Investigation report on lead paint testing and responding immediately,” said **Council Member Andy King**. “With the announcement of executives terminated, demoted and suspended, as well as others measures including improvements to regulatory oversight, it’s clear this agency has begun to do the hard work of regaining the people's trust, and I am committed to partner and work with NYCHA as they make strides to improve service and transparency, and ensuring the ball is never dropped like this again.”

“Chair Olatoye’s multi-pronged response to the shortfall in the authority’s lead compliance is a historic and comprehensive plan to ensure that NYCHA residents are living in safe housing,” said **Council Member Antonio Reynoso**. “Instituting a Compliance Department will aid New

Yorkers ability to hold NYCHA accountable as well as promote good practices towards improving the quality of life for residents throughout the City.”

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About the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

NYCHA’s mission is to increase opportunities for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers by providing safe, affordable housing and facilitating access to social and community services. More than 400,000 New Yorkers reside in NYCHA’s 326 public housing developments around the five boroughs, and another 235,000 receive subsidized rental assistance in private homes through the NYCHA-administered Section 8 Leased Housing Program. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/nycha and for regular updates on NYCHA news and services, connect with us via www.facebook.com/NYCHA and www.twitter.com/NYCHA.