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## **2021 Healthy Babies Initiative Grant Recipients Announced: Empowering City Leaders to Improve Children's Health and Reduce Disparities**

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Healthy Babies Bright Futures (HBBF) and the Mayors Innovation Project (MIP) are thrilled to announce the winners of the 2021 Healthy Babies Initiative. The Initiative empowers city leaders to improve children's health and reduce health disparities in their communities by scaling programs that decrease regular exposures to chemicals that harm babies' brain development.

Grant recipients will focus on reducing lead exposure and air toxics; engaging communities in increasing access to local, organic produce; and integrating neurotoxic exposure reduction into energy efficiency programs. From an outstanding pool of cities ranging from 32,000 to 250,000 residents, five cities were selected to receive a \$10,000 grant and technical assistance, as well as an opportunity to present at a future MIP meeting.

The five grant recipients are:

- **Duluth, MN** will examine purchasing policies and practices in City operations, identify opportunities for more environmentally preferred purchases, and implement changes to create healthier public spaces for residents and visitors.
- **Grand Rapids, MI** will implement a rental property lead hazard inspection program in response to a concerning increase in childhood lead poisoning since 2014. Funding will support community engagement, stakeholder education, and the development of an amendment to the current city housing code, all preparing for the launch of a new ordinance and code enforcement.
- **Madison, WI** will augment an existing city program designed to promote energy efficiency in multi-family housing by adding a lead testing and mitigation program designed to identify and reduce the presence of lead and mold in multifamily housing.
- **Pine Bluff, AR**'s Parks and Recreation Department will help make parks safer for children and families by testing water in public drinking fountains for lead, tree planting, community education about lead-safe soils, and community garden efforts.
- **San Rafael, CA** will scale production of a Production Farm operated by Community Action Marin, providing a resource for fresh, nutritious and organic produce to families of low income



while running daily preschool classes and serving as a space for children and families to play as they learn about gardening and nutrition.

“Cities nationwide are struggling with issues around food insecurity, lead hazards, and poor air quality,” said MIP Co-Managing Director Katya Spear. “The pandemic has only exacerbated these issues, as well as the racial and economic inequity that accompany them. We hope these projects, and the peer learning they will inspire, will serve as a model for cities around the country.”

“These diverse grant recipients are helping to weave a net of resilience for the children in their communities,” said Kyra Naumoff Shields, HBBF’s Bright Cities Program Director. “Their actions — including the integration of strategies to reduce neurotoxic exposures into energy efficiency programs and local ordinances — provide scalable models ready for uptake by other US cities. **But the ultimate winners are the babies in our lives whose health — and opportunity for a fairer start in life — is dramatically improved.**”

One out of six children in the United States suffer from a neurodevelopmental disability, and there is strong evidence that links chemical exposures to neurodevelopmental delays. Though exposures to chemicals that harm the brain — from drinking water, food, air, soil and consumer products — are not the sole cause for these lifelong learning and developmental delays, they are among the most preventable.

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[The Mayors Innovation Project](#) is a national learning network for mayors committed to shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and efficient democratic government. Healthy Babies Bright Futures ([hbbf.org](http://hbbf.org)) is an alliance of scientists, nonprofit organizations and donors working to create and support initiatives that measurably reduce exposures to neurotoxic chemicals in the first one thousand days of development.

[Healthy Babies Bright Futures](#) (HBBF) is an alliance of scientists, nonprofit organizations and donors working to create and support initiatives that measurably reduce exposures to neurotoxic chemicals in the first one thousand days of development. Our efforts are inspired and supported by science and data and designed to help restore the chance for a full life to children who would otherwise face brain-diminishing exposures to toxic chemicals beginning in utero.

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