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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 6, 2017

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ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE IN OUR COMMUNITY:

ATTORNEY GENERAL DONOVAN LAUNCHES "LANDLORD RESTORATION PROGRAM" TO IMPROVE LEAD SAFETY IN RENTAL HOUSING

Vermont's housing stock is among the oldest in the nation. More than 70 percent of homes in the state were built before 1978 and are presumed to contain lead. To help property owners and landlords address lead exposure and protect the health of tenants and their children the Attorney General's Office is launching a community-focused program to assist property owners who are landlords comply with Vermont's lead safety laws.

The Landlord Restoration Program will provide information and assistance to eligible property owners to restore rental properties with lead paint hazards. This includes allowing extended time for repairs, without state enforcement for past non-compliance for participating landlords. The program does not apply to existing enforcement or court actions already underway by the Office of the Attorney General or the Vermont Department of Health.

"This is a win for everyone involved. Landlords will receive compliance help from my office without facing adverse consequences, while Vermonters and their children will benefit from safer housing conditions," said Attorney General T.J. Donovan.

Dr. Mark Levine, Commissioner at the Department of Health which oversees lead paint compliance, agrees. "There is no safe level of lead in the body. Too much lead in the body can cause serious and permanent health problems," said Dr. Levine. "Our investigations show that

about 50 percent of lead poisoned kids live in rental housing, and 90 percent of these rental properties are not in compliance with Vermont's lead law. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable, and this program can certainly help property owners take the important actions that the law requires.”

The Landlord Restoration Program will focus on Vermont towns with some of the highest rates of elevated blood levels in children, beginning with a pilot program in Rutland. The Attorney General’s Office will hold a community meeting in Rutland on September 13, 2017 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. in the Green Mountain Power Energy Innovation Center located at 66 Merchants Row.

Attorney General Donovan said a key aspect of the program is the broad spectrum of state and community partners. “I am pleased to work with such supportive partners like the Vermont Apartment Owners Association, the Department of Health, Vermont Legal Aid, Vermont Housing Conservation Board, and the Burlington Lead Program.”

“The Vermont Apartment Owners Association is pleased to work with the State on this important issue,” said Angela Zaikowski for the Apartment Owners Association, adding that: “we encourage landlords to comply with the lead paint requirements and file their compliance statements with the Department of Health. We agree that education and outreach are the best tools for accomplishing compliance with the state lead laws.”

Vermont Legal Aid offered their support, noting that: “redressing the health hazards of lead paint is part of our mission to protect vulnerable Vermonters. We are encouraged by this cooperative effort to improve Vermont’s rental housing conditions.”

The Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB) also supports the program. “We understand that finances are often the primary hurdle for landlords to bring their properties up to

code,” said Ron Rupp, Director of the Lead Hazard Reduction Program at VHCB. “Rentals that serve low- and moderate-income tenants may be eligible for financial assistance from our program to address lead paint issues.” Property owners can learn more at this web site www.vhcb.org/Lead-Paint/ or contact VHCB at (802) 828-5064 or leadinfo@vhcb.org.

Landlords and property owners who have questions about the program or the community meeting can call the Attorney General’s Consumer Assistance Program at 800-649-2424 or email AGO.CAP@vermont.gov

For more information about Vermont’s lead law visit the Attorney General’s website at: <http://www.ago.vermont.gov> and choose “Lead” from the A-Z listing.

Learn more about lead and childhood lead poisoning at healthvermont.gov.

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