

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



# A NOTE FROM CHARLOTTE BRODY

Over the past decade, Healthy Babies Bright Futures has funded innovative toxics reduction projects in 44 cities, tested more than 1,200 homes for lead in tap water, authored groundbreaking original reports, and built advocacy campaigns that have lowered the levels of lead and arsenic in the foods babies eat.

And while we didn't continue to find significant sources of new funding, we *did* continue to succeed in our mission of finding measurable ways to reduce babies' neurotoxic exposures. But we can't stop there: there's still so much work to be done.



The Bright Cities program, which has partnered with more than 40 cities in just 7 years, has created a thriving, sustainable, and replicable model. While 2024 will see the Bright Cities program outgrowing its possibilities underneath the HBBF umbrella, its potential for impact remains limitless.

Our food research has made HBBF synonymous with the subject of heavy metals in baby food. When the FDA released Closer to Zero's proposed actions for lead levels in baby food, 328 outlets reported on the announcement – and **323** of those stories cited HBBF data in their reporting.

Because of this niche – and vital – role that Healthy Babies Bright Futures plays, in the coming year, we are passionate about continuing our work on healthy baby food, including educating parents and advocating for comprehensive federal limits that continue to lower the levels of heavy metals in baby foods closer to zero.

To learn more or to fund HBBF's work, visit [hbbf.org](https://hbbf.org)

# BRIGHT CITIES

In 2023, the Bright Cities Program provided more than **\$240,000** to fund projects in twelve cities across the country, including seven new Bright Cities.

The three priorities in our 2023 RFP process were:

- **Lead reduction.** HBBF awarded \$60,000 to four cities that proposed lead service line replacement projects.
- **Climate co-benefits.** Three \$25,000 grants allowed cities to plan a locally appropriate action that reduces neurotoxic exposures with a climate, resilience, and/or sustainability co-benefit.
- **Leveraging grants for federal funding.** These pilot grants, ranging from \$15,000 to \$25,000, were designed to help cities secure additional funding from the historic amounts of federal dollars now available.

In addition to protecting thousands of children and families, these grants allowed HBBF's messaging to reach a larger audience, garnering six city-specific news stories in local press, including the [Meadville Tribune](#), [Flint Beat](#), and the [Clarksville Leaf Chronicle](#).

## MAKING CLIMATE CONNECTIONS

Because many cities don't employ public health staff – and because city staff have a lot of competing priorities – reducing neurotoxic exposures isn't always at the top of their to-do list. HBBF's [newest infographic](#) illustrates how reducing air toxics and environmentally preferable purchasing can reduce neurotoxic exposures *and* reduce emissions contributing to climate change.

To further build on this information, we also hosted a Coffee & Conversation event in November that gave attendees practical, real-world examples of how to build an actionable roadmap to improving climate impacts and health outcomes for babies.

## COALITION-BUILDING WEBINAR

Together with the BlueGreen Alliance, we [hosted a conversation](#) with three innovative leaders from the Midwest: Alicia Smith, Executive Director of Junction Coalition; Deanna Branch, Advocacy Organizer for COLE's Lead Safe and Healthy Home Project; and Kevin Kane, Chief Economist and co-founder of Green Homeowners United.

The speakers shared how they utilized a coalition model to create jobs for women and BIPOC communities and to protect children from childhood lead poisoning.

BRIGHT CITIES BY THE NUMBERS

\$240K  
in grants to cities



44  
Bright Cities

11  
new webinars,  
presentations, and  
partnerships

“We’re focused on mitigating lead service lines in our city. Having **400 Healthier YOUTH Kits** [funded by HBBF] with Brita filters is an important part of driving awareness of lead in drinking water.”

— *Mayor Tito Brown*  
*Mayor of Youngstown, Ohio*

# HEALTHY BABY FOOD

Healthy Babies Bright Futures has become a go-to resource on baby food safety – and our staff members are nationally recognized as experts in the space. When recent cases of lead contamination in baby food pouches hit national news, reporters immediately turned to HBBF for expertise.

Jane Houlihan, our Research Director, was featured on *NBC Nightly News* and *The Washington Post*, and our National Director, Charlotte Brody, was quoted in *The New York Times*' coverage.

*“Advocates and scientists have raised concerns about heavy metals in baby food. Healthy Babies Bright Futures released a 2019 report showing that of more than 150 baby and toddler foods tested, 95% had detectable levels of heavy metals.”*

— The Washington Post

More than **500 news stories** mentioned HBBF this year, including CNN, CBS, Forbes, USA Today, and The New York Times, with an estimated ad value of **\$17.5M**.

Behind the scenes, we're working with partners on everything from testing to policy change. We're pressuring FDA to get lead out of baby food, with our analysis exposing their failings. We're pushing state WIC programs to remove arsenic-laden rice cereal from approved food lists, with five states acting to date. We're also working with scientists to move studies into peer-reviewed journals in order to fuel policy change.

## LEAD IN WATER TESTING

HBBF continued to provide at-cost test kits to families across the country in 2023, with over **1,200 families** to date receiving test results and action steps to lower their exposures. Our tests are uniquely designed to protect bottle-fed infants who drink formula made from tap water. For these babies, the lead level of concern is far lower than EPA's "action level" benchmark that commercial lead-in-water test kits rely on.

HBBF provides families with their test results, safety ratings for bottle-fed infants, and personalized action steps to keep infants and young children safe from the lead detected in their water samples.



## HEALTHY BABY FOOD BY THE NUMBERS

**\$17.5M**  
in earned media  
coverage



**500**  
news stories

**1,200**  
homes tested for  
lead

“If you’re selling spices by the pound or ton, you’re going to get a better price. But you’re also going to poison children [with lead].”

— *Charlotte Brody, quoted in The New York Times*



Little things add up: each step brings us closer to a world where every baby is healthy and can count on a bright future that's free from toxic chemicals.

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