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**Written Testimony to the House Environment and Transportation Committee
HB 636 - School Buildings - Drinking Water Outlets - Elevated Level of Lead
(Safe School Drinking Water Act)
February 10, 2021**

SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Barve and members of the Committee. On behalf of our more than 20,000 public education, local, and state workers across the state, AFT-Maryland asks for a favorable report on HB 636 – the Safe School Drinking Water Act.

As the statewide organization that represents the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU), AFT-Maryland is very concerned that the public school buildings in Baltimore City are some of the oldest in the state, including the plumbing.

For several years now, because the pipes that bring drinking water to our students contain unacceptable levels of lead, the school district has made the decision to import bottled water rather than risk poisoning our students and staff with the unsafe tap water in the buildings. This has been at a great expense to the local school district.

Lead is known in the scientific community to be one of the most devastating neurotoxins known to man. Maryland's own Department of Health found that, between 1993 and 2013, 65,000 children in Baltimore City tested positive for dangerously high levels of lead in the blood.

Science has also confirmed that an elevated level of lead in the bloodstream is especially harmful to children as they grow and develop. Even small amounts of lead have been associated with learning disabilities, speech delays, lack of impulse control, aggressive tendencies, and ADHD.

For too long, the students of Baltimore City have gone to schools where we as a state cannot be certain of the safety of the drinking water provided to them through drinking fountains. The science is clear, any level of lead is detrimental to the vital development of children, and these damages last a lifetime.

It is for these reasons that we ask for a favorable report to HB 636.

Marietta English
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