

**Maryland House of Delegates
Environment and Transportation**

**School Buildings - Drinking Water Outlets - Elevated Level of Lead (Safe School Drinking Water Act) HB0636
February 8, 2021 - SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the Montgomery County Council of PTA's (MCCPTA) for the 2021 legislative session. MCCPTA represents over 25,000 members from over 200 school communities. MCCPTA supports HB0636, Safe School Drinking Water Act. This bill would lower the acceptable lead levels in school drinking water to 5 parts per billion from 20 ppb, which is more protective for children.

When the original Maryland school drinking water lead testing bill passed in 2017, it required that all school drinking outlets be tested at 3 year intervals. If the test results showed a lead level above 20 parts per billion, the outlet had to be turned off until it was remediated and re-tested. This level came from the EPA's 3 T's (A Training, Testing, and Taking Action Approach) guide. The GAO then came out with a report stating that the 20 ppb recommended in the 3 T's guide was not health based. The 3 T's now has removed the 20 ppb language, and has replaced that language with the following: *"There is no safe level of lead for children. EPA encourages schools to prioritize remediation efforts based on lead sample results and to use the steps in the toolkit to pinpoint potential lead sources to reduce their lead levels to the lowest possible concentrations."* In that same guide, Appendix D uses 5ppb as an example as a very low amount of lead. The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends lead levels at under 1 ppb for children. We now know that any lead exposure can harm children.

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a lead free fixture and that achieving less than 1ppb lead in water could be problematic, although we should look at that goal in the near future by using the filter first strategy. FDA uses the 5 ppb as their guidelines for bottled water, and our neighbor, Washington DC uses the 5 ppb lead limit, with a goal of less than 1 ppb. Montgomery County Council, acting as a board of health, has also adopted the 5 ppb lead level, with the Montgomery County Public Schools fully supporting the measure.

We are asking that Maryland use the 5 ppb guideline since the 20 ppb is not health based. The failed outlets may be turned off, and then the most used outlets can be prioritized, preferably applying the use of water filters. We encourage use of the Healthy School fund in order to target schools with the highest levels of lead. The benefit outweighs the costs of lead exposure to growing children's brains. Knowing what the damage of lead can do to children's ability to learn, removing sources will only enhance educational opportunities. Many older school facilities are in areas with high rates of poverty, and these are the schools that have the most issues with lead in their fixtures. This is an equity issue. Many PTAs that have plenty of funds buy filtered bottle filling stations for schools resulting in more protection for those children. Please protect all of Maryland's children by voting favorably on The Safe School Drinking Water Act.

MCCPTA recommends a favorable report on HB0636.

Respectfully,

Laura Stewart
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