

February 7, 2021

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 636: School Buildings – Drinking Water Outlets - Elevated Lead levels – Safe School Drinking Water Act of 2021

Members of the House Appropriations, Environment and Transportation Committees.

Per the American Academy of Pediatrics, Lead has terrible effects on the brains of children. It negatively impacts the development of the brains of school aged children in a number of ways. The neuro cognitive effects we have seen a little sampling of cases in cities like Flint, MI, where the lead levels were horrific, and the resulting harm to the student population was catastrophic. The incidence of developmental and learning disabilities in children skyrocketed in that city due to exposure to dangerous levels of lead in the public drinking water supply.

Our local school system in Anne Arundel county last conducted tests of the safety of drinking water within its school buildings in 2018-2019. Their own testing and lab results showed that lead levels in school buildings were not great and could potentially be harmful to humans per CDC guidelines. Excerpt taken from the AACPS website:

“AACPS tested 14,251 total outlets, 13,506 (94.77 percent) of which did not have elevated levels of lead. Of the 745 outlets (5.23 percent) which had elevated levels of lead, 112 – or 0.79 percent of the outlets tested – were consumable water outlets.”

Some of these tests are conducted in a variety of school buildings, old and new. Despite the spin, 112 is not a small number. 112 of these water outlets students and staff members were drinking from not knowing the dangers that lay within the water. How many people were drinking from those outlets on a daily basis? And other school systems (Baltimore City) have even older buildings, with aging water pipes, and I am sure that their testing has shown their lead levels testing are probably just as bad or are probably much worse.

We need to do better for our students to provide safe drinking water during the school day. Granted we are having this discussion in the midst of a pandemic, when most students are learning from home. But let's not lose sight of the big picture. While we are performing upgrades and repairs to school HVAC systems as we adjust to the realities of Covid 19, let's not forget the water quality issues.

Please help to improve the safety standards of drinking water in schools. One day soon we will have our kids back in all of our school buildings. Let's work to protect and support all of our students so that they can gain the skills and education to reach their full potential and achieve great heights.

We ask that you please support House Bill 636. Please return a favorable report on HB 636. Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo
Parent and advocate for persons living with disabilities
Parent Advocacy Consortium

Sources and Resources:

Flint MI water Crisis: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis>

2018-2019 AACPS Lead level test results can be found on the AACPS website:
<https://www.aacps.org/Page/6408>

CDC Lead levels in Drinking Water:
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/csem.asp?csem=34&po=8#:~:text=EPA's%20action%20level%20for%20lead,items%2C%20cosmetics%20and%20bottled%20water.>

American Academy of Peds Website: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/lead-exposure/Pages/Detection-of-Lead-Poisoning.aspx>