

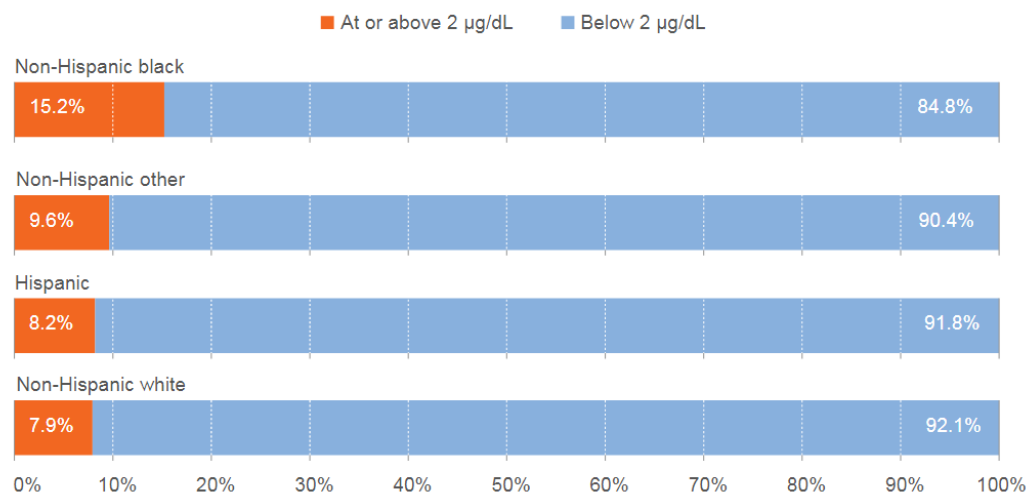


To: The Honorable Chair, Senator Paul G. Pinsky  
From: Melissa S. Rock, Birth to Three Strategic Initiative Director  
Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director  
Re.: **SB 992: School Buildings- Drinking Water Outlets—Elevated Level of Lead (Safe School Drinking Water Act)**  
Date: February 11, 2020  
Position: **SUPPORT**

Surveys from 2016 estimate that 15 to 22 million people across the country have lead water pipes.<sup>i</sup> The American Water Works Association did a study recently which found that nearly a third of U.S. water lines contain lead.<sup>ii</sup> The estimate is that there are six million lead service lines across the U.S.<sup>iii</sup> Lead exposure happens “through the corrosion of lead service lines (the part of a water pipe that connects a...building to the public water main).”<sup>iv</sup> As Child Trends points out, “**no level of lead in the blood is considered safe.**”<sup>v</sup> In fact, research shows that even lower levels of lead in the blood (3-5 µg/dl) “can damage the brain, leading to impaired memory and executive functioning skills.”<sup>vi</sup> It is also important to note that not all children are equally impacted by lead poisoning. Children of color—particularly Black children-- are more likely to experience lead poisoning than any other group.<sup>vii</sup>

### Black children are more likely to have higher blood lead levels

Share of children ages 1 to 5 with blood lead levels below and above 2 µg/dL by race and ethnicity, 2011-2014



Source: Altarum analysis of National Center for Health Statistics, “National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011–2012,” accessed May 26, 2017, [link](#); and National Center for Health Statistics, “National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2013–2014,” accessed May 26, 2017, [link](#)

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Advocates for Children and Youth builds a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children and families of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential.

Children who are lead poisoned are **7 times more likely to drop out of school** and **6 times more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.**<sup>viii</sup> Given the racial disparities in who experiences lead poisoning, this is another driver of the racial disparities in educational outcomes and criminal justice system involvement. Learning disabilities that can affect children who have been lead poisoned include: violent, aggressive behavior; speech delays; Attention Deficit Disorder; hyperactivity; diminished IQ; hearing and memory problems; and reduced motor control and balance.<sup>ix</sup> SB 992 ensures that “elevated level of lead” includes any lead concentration in drinking water that exceeds 5 parts per billion.

Last year, the General Assembly passed the Lead Reduction and Remediation Act, though this did not guarantee sufficient funding for all affected schools to repair and/or replace lead-contaminated pipes or water outlets. While most schools in Baltimore City have banned drinking from all sinks and water fountains, 519 schools across the state have been found to have elevated levels of lead in the drinking water supply, including more than 200 schools in Montgomery county.<sup>x</sup>

**We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 992 to help eliminate the exposure to lead poisoning that Maryland’s children currently face in their schools and to help avoid the lifelong impacts the lead poisoning can have.**

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/united-states-can-eliminate-childhood-lead-exposure/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.sciline.org/evidence-blog/lead-drinking-water>

<sup>iii</sup> Id.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/united-states-can-eliminate-childhood-lead-exposure/>

<sup>v</sup> Id.

<sup>vi</sup> Id.

<sup>vii</sup> Id.

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/home-health-hazards/lead>

<sup>ix</sup> Id.