



The Maryland State Medical Society

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TO: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Members, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
The Honorable Samuel I. Rosenberg

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
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Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 19, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 457 – *Environment – Drinking Water Outlets in School Buildings – Testing for Elevated Level of Lead*

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On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, we submit this letter of **support** House Bill 457.

The provisions of House Bill 457 propose to strengthen the testing thresholds and requirements for school drinking water outlets that were enacted through legislation passed in 2019. The bill amends the current threshold for a determination of an elevated lead level in a drinking water outlet for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended standard that is not defined to a specific standard of 5 parts per billion.

It is well recognized that no safe blood lead level in children has ever been identified. Children can be exposed to lead from a number of sources, including tap water. Lead exposure from tap water comes from the decay of plumbing or the solder that connects pipes, and the risk is higher in older buildings. Water that remains in pipes overnight or when schools are not in session stays in contact with lead pipes or lead solder and could contain higher levels of lead. As such, it is important to identify elevated levels of lead in drinking water in schools in order to reduce or prevent a child's exposure to lead.

High levels of lead in tap water can cause health effects if the lead in the water enters the blood. A high blood lead level can cause damage to the brain and kidneys and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of the body. Children under the age of six are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can affect their health and development, such as impaired mental and physical development as well as hearing problems. Specifying a specific threshold for defining an elevated blood level provides clear direction to the schools with respect to their responsibilities to address the elevated level and protect the children they serve. It also enhances the safety and well-being of our children from the negative health impacts associated with lead exposure. A favorable report is requested.

**For more information call:**

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