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**Written Testimony to the House Environment and Transportation Committee
HB 457 - Environment - Drinking Water Outlets in School Buildings –
Testing for Elevated Level of Lead
February 19, 2020**

SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Barve and members of the Committee. On behalf of the 20,000 state, municipal, and public education workers residing in Maryland, AFT-Maryland asks for a favorable report for HB 457.

As the statewide organization for the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU), AFT-Maryland is very concerned the public school buildings in Baltimore City are some of the oldest in the state. For a number of years now, because of fears that 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 unsafe drinking water.

Lead is known in the scientific community to be one of the most devastating neurotoxins known to man. The state'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 the committee give a favorable report to HB 457.

Marietta English
President