



Committee: Environment & Transportation
Testimony on: HB636 - “School Buildings - Drinking Water Outlets - Elevated Level of Lead (Safe School Drinking Water Act)”
Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing
Person
Submitting: Diana Younts, co-chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 10, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB636. MLC’s Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and grasstops organizations focused on getting State level climate justice legislation passed. Each bill for which we advocate is evaluated through an equity lens, with a particular focus on how disadvantaged communities are affected by the bill and the bill’s climate impact.

HB636 would aid the efforts of local school systems in Maryland to address the pernicious presence of lead in school drinking water – a substantial threat to the health of Maryland’s children – by defining “an elevated level of lead” in drinking water as a level that exceeds five parts per billion.

This legislation complements and furthers the intent of legislation enacted in 2019 by the General Assembly to reduce the presence of lead in school drinking water. In that legislation, the General Assembly declared that “any exposure to lead in drinking water is dangerous to the health and development of children,” and that “[i]t is the intent of the General Assembly that schools work proactively to reduce the concentration of lead in drinking water outlets below 5 parts per billion.” The five parts per-billion standard is in accord with the standard used by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Lead is a neurotoxin that adversely affects humans and virtually every other form of life. Lead exposure in young children can result in lowered intelligence, reading and learning disabilities, impaired hearing, reduced attention span, hyperactivity, delayed puberty, reduced postnatal growth, and reduced earning potential. It also is associated with reduced impulse control; there have been associations between childhood lead exposure and proclivity to violence and crime in adulthood. Furthermore, lead exposure is often insidious

– while acute poisoning can result in dramatic health failures, the more common chronic exposures have no distinct symptoms and are therefore sometimes overlooked or misinterpreted, leading to possibly-permanent brain damage.

Since the General Assembly has told schools that they should “work proactively to reduce the concentration of lead in drinking water outlets below 5 parts per billion,” it is fully appropriate to define “an elevated level of lead” in drinking water using this standard. The threat posed to the health of Maryland’s children by lead is grave, and there should not be any ambiguity as to the obligation of schools to act in accord with a clear 5 parts-per-billion standard.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for HB636.

Submitted by:

MLC Climate Justice Wing:

Maryland Legislative Coalition
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
WISE
Frack Free Frostburg
Mountain Maryland Movement
Clean Water Action
Maryland Sierra Club
Howard County Indivisible
Howard County Sierra Club
Columbia Association Climate change and sustainability advisory committee
HoCo Climate Action
CHEER
Climate XChange - Maryland
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/
National Parks Conservation Association
350 Montgomery County
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Audubon Naturalist Society
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Environmental Justice Ministry
Coalition For Smarter Growth

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign
MoCo DCC
Potomac Conservancy
Casa de Maryland
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Clean Air Prince Georges
Ji'Aire's Workgroup
Laurel Resist
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial Cafos
Wicomico NAACP
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Chispa MD
Climate Law & Policy Project
Poor Peoples Campaign
Labor for Sustainability
The Nature Conservancy
Clean Air Prince Georges
350 Baltimore
Maryland Campaign for Human Rights
Power Shift Network

