



## Testimony in Support of House Bill 636

### School Buildings – Drinking Water Outlets – Elevated Level of Lead (Safe School Drinking Water Act)

**TO:** Chair Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore

**DATE:** February 10, 2021

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports House Bill 636 as it would alter the definitions of “elevated level of lead” for the purposes of certain provisions of law requiring certain testing for the lead in certain drinking water outlets in certain occupied public and nonpublic school buildings. This bill would also require schools to take certain measures to remediate a certain drinking water outlet. The alteration in the definition of “elevated level of lead” would change the level of lead detection to 5 parts per billion instead of 20 per billion.

This bill is particularly important because of the potential learning disabilities and additional health challenges that even limited lead consumption can cause children. Studies show that children consuming low amounts of lead can lead to behavioral issues, learning problems, slowed growth and hyper-activity. Students that don’t consume lead have higher chances of finishing high school and avoiding the criminal justice system.

This bill requires and provides to schools to update the pipes/ faucets that would be used for students to drink water. Currently, Montgomery County has taken lead remediation steps to ensure that children can safely drink from fountains. It is necessary for the remaining counties in Maryland to adopt the same changes to ensure that children remain healthy and can perform at their best while in school. In Baltimore City, water is imported into schools so that students and staff can have access to clean and safe drinking water. Although the imported water can be used as a solution to drinking water, the faucet water is still used by kitchen staff. Statewide legislation would show that Maryland recognizes clean drinking water as a necessity rather than an option for all students. While there is a cost associated with it, the long-term effects of completing these measures would be worth it. In addition, treating one child with the effects of lead can be more costly than making that changes that HB636 would require.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League works collaboratively to support data-informed, community-driven solutions to align resources to dismantle systemic barriers that limit the possibilities for children, families, and communities. Our policy advocacy work is also guided by and in support of the Governor’s Office Of Crime Prevention Youth And Victim Services’ [Results for Child Well-Being](#). Through our Strategic Planning Process, we have prioritized three of these results areas, focusing on the success of Baltimore City’s children in school; the economic stability of families; and the safety of communities for children, youth, and families. We support HB 786 in particular because of its alignment with these result areas, working to ensure that “Children are Healthy”; subsequently resulting in “Children (who) are Successful in School,” “Youth (that) Will Complete School,” and “Communities (that) are Safe for Children, Youth and Families.”

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