

February 22, 2021

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee (EHE)

RE: **SB 546-** Voluntary Admission

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee, I am here today to voice my support for Senate Bill 546.

My name is Moalie Jose and I currently serve as a member-at-large on the Baltimore County Board of Education. I am also a licensed Environmental Engineer with 20 years of experience in Water Resources. I speak as a Board member and not on behalf of the Board. Lead in school water has been an issue plaguing not just Baltimore County but all of Maryland. Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) began testing for lead in school water in 2016 and completed them in fall of 2019. We looked at lead test results for over 150 schools. As is protocol, faucets that had lead levels above 20 parts per billion (ppb) were shut down and listed for replacement. Since the action level was 20 ppb, faucets that tested between 5 ppb and 20 ppb, were considered “safe.” In 2019 I introduced a motion to reduce the action level for BCPS from 20 ppb to 5 ppb. That motion passed unanimously.

Our current state action level of 20 ppb of lead is inadequate. We know that even low levels of lead in children can cause behavior and learning problems, slowed growth and hyperactivity. Lead is a heavy metal and a neurotoxin and there is no level of lead that is considered safe. Lead is introduced in our water through aging infrastructure, lead fixtures and faucets. Turning a faucet off that exceeds the action level of lead has no costs associated with it, but letting our children drink that water does. The US EPA’s revised Lead and Copper Rule which will be finalized this year will expand sampling to schools and childcare facilities.

The tenet of this Bill takes a proactive approach to help protect our children’s health in all Maryland Schools.