



Senate Bill 546

*School Buildings - Drinking Water Outlets - Elevated Level of Lead
(Safe School Drinking Water Act)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee

Date: February 24, 2021

From: Drew Jabin

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 546. While counties agree that eliminating student exposure to elevated lead levels is an important health and safety issue, current law and regulations are comprehensive and rigorous and MACo believes there is no need to enact further requirements at this time.

Under a new law enacted in 2017, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) was required to adopt regulations requiring the testing of all drinking water outlets in schools for elevated levels of lead. The law required MDE, in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Department of General Services (DGS), and Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH), to adopt regulations to require periodic testing for the presence of lead in each “drinking water outlet” located in an occupied public or nonpublic school building. The regulations required initial testing to be conducted by July 1, 2018 and phased in further testing. The regulations also established standards for specific follow-up actions in response to test results indicating elevated lead levels.

Before adopting the required regulations, MDE convened a stakeholder group of legislators, and State agency and local school system representatives. Following the adoption of the State regulations, MDE conducted training and school systems began to earnestly work to assign staff, contract with testing services, and invest in the remediation of drinking water outlets discovered to have elevated lead levels.

SB 546 would lower the threshold for detectable lead in drinking water, resulting in a much more significant and costly burden to remediate additional fixtures throughout Maryland’s public schools. MACo recognizes the goals of safe drinking water in schools and sensible maintenance – but asserts that current law and regulations are ample. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 546 and requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report.