



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 636

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

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 10, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
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Representation Project
Job Opportunities Task Force
League of Women Voters of Maryland
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Maryland Community Action
Partnership
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Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
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Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports HB 636. Surveys from 2016 estimate that 15 to 22 million people across the country have lead water pipes.¹ The American Water Works Association did a study recently which found that nearly a third of U.S. water lines contain lead.² The estimate is that there are six million lead service lines across the U.S.³ Lead exposure happens “through the corrosion of lead service lines (the part of a water pipe that connects a...building to the public water main).”⁴ As Child Trends points out, “**no level of lead in the blood is considered safe.**”⁵ In fact, research shows that even lower levels of lead in the blood (3-5 µg/dl) “can damage the brain, leading to impaired memory and executive functioning skills.”⁶ It is also important to note that not all children are equally impacted by lead poisoning. Children of color are more likely to experience lead poisoning than white, non-Hispanic children.⁷

Children who are lead poisoned are 7 times more likely to drop out of school and 6 times more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.⁸ Given the racial disparities in who experiences lead poisoning, this is another driver of the racial disparities in educational outcomes and criminal justice system involvement. Learning disabilities that can affect children who have been lead poisoned include: violent, aggressive behavior; speech delays; Attention Deficit Disorder; hyperactivity; diminished IQ; hearing and memory problems; and reduced motor control and balance.⁹ HB 636 ensures that “elevated level of lead” includes any lead concentration in drinking water than exceeds 5 parts per billion.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed the Lead Reduction and Remediation Act, though this did not guarantee sufficient funding for all affected schools to repair and/or replace lead-contaminated pipes or water outlets. **MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 636 to help eliminate the exposure to lead poisoning that Maryland’s children currently face in their schools and to help avoid the lifelong impacts the lead poisoning can have.**

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/united-states-can-eliminate-childhood-lead-exposure/>

² <https://www.sciline.org/evidence-blog/lead-drinking-water>

³ Id.

⁴ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/united-states-can-eliminate-childhood-lead-exposure/>

⁵ Id.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Id.

⁸ <http://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/home-health-hazards/lead>

⁹ Id.