

**Testimony Supporting HB 4340, HB 4341, and HB 4342**

An Act to provide Filtered Drinking Water Stations for Lead Free Drinking Water in Schools and Childcare Facilities in Michigan.

**Submitted by Rebecca Lazarus, Former President & Treasurer of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education, Ann Arbor, Michigan**

April 13, 2023

To the Honorable Chair Rogers and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rebecca Lazarus. I served on the Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education from 2019 to 2021 as Treasurer and in 2022 as Board President. I am proud to be a mother of 2 children who currently attend Michigan public schools.

I am here to testify in support of HB 4340, 4341, and 4342. These bills will provide crucial guidance as well as the necessary funding to install state-of-the-art filtered drinking water stations in all Michigan schools and childcare facilities. This will ensure that over 1.5 million children in our great state will have access to safe clean drinking water.

As caretakers of children, we must make sure that every child has the opportunity to build a bright future and develop physically, cognitively, socially, intellectually, and emotionally in a healthy environment. Access to safe drinking water is a basic human need. Students in Michigan spend on average 35 hours per week in school, while a large percentage of these same children spend an additional 10 to 15 hours per week in childcare facilities.

Soon after the Flint Water Crisis, in 2016 the Ann Arbor Public Schools proactively tested and sampled various water sources in 17 of their 32 schools. Unfortunately, the district found lead in the water. We immediately reached out to industry experts for professional guidance to remediate this toxin from our water systems. We quickly discovered that the guidance among professionals was inconsistent and their solutions were costly. Experts differed on what was an acceptable lead level in drinking water; i.e. 0, >5, 10, or >15 pbb. Educators and health experts agree that any amount of lead ingested by young children and even older children can be dangerous and cause serious life-long mental and health problems. There is no way to remove lead once it enters the body. Their proposed solution to remove all old plumbing pipes, fixtures, and joints from our 32 school buildings with an average age of 62 years, was not financially feasible. The only financially responsible solution to confidently address this problem was to install filters. In 2019/20, the district implemented the Filter First plan. It worked! In hindsight, it would have been extremely helpful if we would have had HB 4340, 4341, and 4342 in place in 2016. It would have helped guide us through the remediation process efficiently and saved the district a lot of money.

Michigan is one of 12 states in the U.S. that provide nothing to school districts for building construction and maintenance. Fortunately, in Ann Arbor, we are blessed to have a well-resourced community willing to support a major capital bond and sinking fund millage. This funding mechanism has filled our school's funding gap, but many Michigan school districts and childcare centers do not have the means to issue bonds or levy tax mills. Proper funding of these bills is an important component to ensure their successful implementation and continued support.

HB 4340, 4341, and 4342 will provide school districts and childcare facilities in Michigan a clear roadmap and the tools needed to implement and maintain a healthy source of drinking water in their buildings. Passing HB 4340, 4341, and 4342 will give children and their families confidence that the water they are drinking in these institutions is safe because their legislators made it possible through clear thoughtful legislation and generous funding.

Please vote in favor of HB 4340, 4341, and 4342 and I ask that you encourage your colleagues to join you in these votes. Thank you and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Lazarus', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Rebecca Lazarus**

Parent of 2

Former President of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education

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