

March 3rd, 2020

To: Members of the House Natural Resources Committee
From: Patrick Kelly, MPH Public Health Professional and Concerned Citizen
Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 5104 and 5105 (Filter First Drinking Water Protections)

Members of the House Natural Resources Committee,

Parents should feel confident knowing that when they send their kids to school or daycare, their children have safe, lead-free water to drink. Unfortunately, students and children across the state of Michigan attend schools and daycare facilities with no requirements for the safety of their drinking water.

House Bills 5104 and 5105 would offer immediate action to protect drinking water in Michigan schools and child care centers through a filter first approach, rather than delay preventative measures for costly testing. As a public health professional with 10 years of experience working in the fields of environmental health, chronic disease management, and health policy I have the relevant background and expertise to advocate for change on this critical issue. Moreover, the birth of my now 18 month old child has spurred me to become actively involved in statewide efforts to protect children from lead exposure in drinking water.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there is no safe level of lead exposure. Lead is a powerful neurotoxicant, meaning that it has irreversible adverse effects on cognitive impairment and behavioral issues. Children and fetuses are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of lead. A recent study found that the cost of lead exposure in our state is over \$271 million a year (accounting for costs associated with healthcare, education, criminal justice, and lost productivity).

Although surrounded by 84% of North America's fresh surface waters, it seems nearly every day Michiganders are confronted with another breaking news story related to environmental contamination of our drinking water. The Flint Water Crisis drew our attention as a horrendous environmental injustice, but leaded water is a statewide issue due to aging infrastructure and regulations permitting lead in fixtures.

That's why a group of lawmakers recently introduced bipartisan "Filter First" legislation to protect the health of kids and ensure they have safe water to drink at school. The legislation would create a plan for installing water filters in schools and monitor their water to ensure it is safe to drink. Certified filters are proven to be effective at reducing lead released into water as it travels through pipes, fixtures and fittings. Some filters are also effective at filtering out long chain PFAS and other contaminants. The legislation would also provide ongoing protection for kids by requiring schools and daycares to test their water annually and replace filters as needed.

Testing drinking water point sources in schools is costly. If tests are positive, they only confirm the lead source without preventing or reducing the exposure. Replacing fixtures and plumbing is not an effective way to reduce lead exposure because plumbing may still legally contain lead. Installing filters represents a cost-effective and immediate solution to protecting children's health because it reduces the number of drinking water sources that need to be monitored and it encourages students to use reusable water bottles.

Lead exposure poses serious threats to the health of our children and their development. Please support House Bills 5104 and 5105 to protect the health of kids across Michigan.

Sincerely,
Patrick Kelly, MPH

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