



HB0636 - School Buildings – Drinking Water Outlets – Elevated Level of Lead

Presented to Hon. Kumer Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 10, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB0636 - School Buildings – Drinking Water Outlets**, sponsored by Delegate Jared Solomon.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. We work to ensure equitable access to basic human rights, including safe drinking water. This is a reproductive health issue as studies have shown that lead exposure can cause miscarriage, still births, and infertility. High-level health risks from lead poisoning include anemia, weakness, and brain damage. ¹

Lead in drinking water is a critical health threat to children, with lead poisoning harming children of marginalized identities. Historically, Baltimore City has been disproportionately affected by high rates of lead exposure within their water and infrastructure. Baltimore City schools have completely shut off water fountains and rely on water coolers as a means in accessing drinking water because of its high lead concentration. This lead issue also affects other Maryland counties, such as Montgomery and Harford, which are also seeing troubling rates of lead concentration in their drinking water. ² There is great concern that schools with the worst rates are located in neighborhoods that are primarily comprised of people of color, This bill reduces environmental racism efforts by ensuring water levels meet the Centers for Disease Control standards of “elevated levels of lead” in all Maryland schools.

Requiring the testing of drinking water is to ensure better health outcomes for Maryland students. We hope that not only will this testing improve drinking water, but also water accessed through any sink in a school that can be used to wash one’s hands after using menstrual products or rinse breast pump equipment used by parenting students, faculty, and staff.

For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0636 - School Buildings – Drinking Water Outlets**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ “Health Problems Caused by Lead,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 18, 2018), <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/health.html>

² <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/high-lead-levels-costly-for-maryland-schools/63635/>