

Testimony

Committee on Education and
Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Council of the District of Columbia
Joint Oversight Hearing on Lead Testing in Public Facilities

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Good morning. My name is Keya Chatterjee, but I'm also known as "Siddharth's mom" to many here. A few months ago my son explained to me as we passed a water fountain that "before black kids couldn't use water fountains because of all the lead and NOW no one is supposed to use the water fountains". I put my head in my hands and wondered for a second how to untangle the confusion in a way that would make sense. I started with, "Oh sweetie, that's not what's going on. One was a struggle we won a long time ago with many heroes in the lead, and the other we are working on now so you can use the water fountains again". As I thought about it, though, I realized that the struggle to end segregation and the struggle for environmental justice are not so different. In both cases the laws are not fair to our children.

The current DCPS policy does not protect our children.

Only applying filters to the drinking sources that are elevated above 15ppb during the annual tests is the equivalent of playing whack a mole and thinking you are done by only covering one hole. We know from the lead results at CHM@Logan that different sources test positive for lead at different times. For example, if there is lead soldering in the system, and microscopic bits of lead washing off every few days, there is no telling which water fountain that piece of lead will come out of, or which of our babies will ingest that piece of lead. It's like playing Russian Roulette with our kids water fountains.

Our ask is simple. We want filters and a law:

#1 We want lead filters applied to ALL drinking water sources in EVERY school that has even ONE non zero reading during the annual testing. We want the filters to be applied this summer, before school starts in August.

#2 We want a DC law codifying this requirement ASAP, not only for DCPS, but also for other children's facilities.

DCPS policies can easily be changed in different administrations, and our experience as parents is that the implementation of these policies become lax in years when there is less media attention on lead poisoning

I also believe that when schools are modernized, the lead pipes and paint should be remediated, however our demands for filters and a law are more time sensitive.

Thank you for joining us in searching for a safe resolution for our children.

Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan specific requests to mitigate the risk of lead consumption by any person

(v 0.02 Draft)

- Add filters which are certified by the National Science Foundation for reducing lead in water on **all** the following water sources **regardless of their Pb test status** (filters must be placed at the mouth of the faucets):
 - Fountains
 - Kitchen sinks
 - Sinks used for food prep
 - Bathroom faucets
- Test all drinking sources every 12 months using up to date, reliable, high quality testing methods.
- Flush potable water lines the week before the beginning of every school year. Consult experts to determine the appropriate amount of time that water lines need to be flushed and where they should be flushed in order to be most effective.
- Provide real-time access to test results for specific fixtures (e.g. the app used to read the barcode on the fixtures). Tests from all prior years should be reflected on the DGS website and app. The DGS website currently only has test results from 2016.
- Communicate in advance the testing schedule. Communicate in a prompt manner the test results, re-test results, when filters are put on, and when they need to be and are replaced.
- Replace fixtures and pipes when school is modernized using the latest specifications regarding lead products. All school renovations should be budgeted for lead pipe replacement.

Our requests contrast DGS' current policy which is to test specific fixtures annually and only provide remediation when the lead results on the test exceed 15ppb. CHML feels this is inadequate and leaves children vulnerable. Lead levels can vary widely throughout the year and spot checks might not identify a problem fixture at the time lead

levels are elevated. Also, even if the fixture is identified, children will likely have been consuming the lead for a long period of time.

We should continue to insist the follow appropriate protocol for testing.