



TESTIMONY

Testimony on A4770 Assembly Women and Children Committee

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Good morning, Committee Chair Assemblywoman Mosquera, Vice Chair Assemblywoman McKnight, and committee members:

My name is Deandrah Cameron, policy manager at New Jersey Future, and I work on lead in drinking water hazards. Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today.

New Jersey Future is a nonprofit organization that believes every New Jerseyan deserves to live in a prosperous, fair economy, thriving community and healthy neighborhood. We promote policies for cost-effective, sustainable water systems in New Jersey and support policies that promote access to safe, clean drinking water. While New Jersey Future is committed to identifying and removing sources of lead in drinking water, including the replacement of lead service lines within 10 years, one of the most effective interim strategies is to ensure that vulnerable populations in harm's way have the necessary resources to limit and prevent exposure. The provisions of A4770 represent significant progress in the area of lead-related exposure intervention for childcare facilities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, even low levels of lead exposure can stunt children's healthy brain development. Children under 6 years old in New Jersey are required to be tested for lead, and therefore act as "lead detectors," indicating the extent and location of lead exposure from all sources, including drinking water. In New Jersey, over 200,000 children under the age of six have lead in their blood, and of those, nearly 6,000 have elevated lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter—the blood lead level that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies as a level of concern.¹ Lead poisoning occurs across the state—in rural, suburban, and urban communities, but it is most prevalent in older cities which often lack the resources to address it.

In 2016, New Jersey's State Department of Health identified 11 NJ cities that have a higher proportion of lead-affected children than Flint, Michigan. The communities with the high lead

¹ Childhood Lead Exposure in New Jersey Annual Report. New Jersey Department of Health.
<http://www.state.nj.us/health/childhoodlead/documents/reports/childhoodlead2015.pdf>.

levels include Atlantic City, East Orange, Elizabeth, Irvington, Jersey City, New Brunswick, Passaic, Paterson, Plainfield, and Trenton, along with Salem and Cumberland counties.²

1. Given that many water utilities do not have a complete inventory of the quantity and location of lead service lines, it will take considerable time to address the risk under the best of circumstances.
2. Many child care providers operate from rental space, particularly in urban areas where the percentage of housing rentals often approximates 75%.
3. Formula-fed infants are particularly at risk, as the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that up to 60% of a child's total lead exposure can be attributed to formula if it is mixed with lead-contaminated water.

As an important and long-awaited step forward, this bill provides a necessary intermediate solution toward protecting our children. The bill requires landlords of residential or nonresidential buildings in which space is rented by child care services providers to install and maintain lead-certified, point-of-use water filters on all building fixtures used to supply water for drinking, food preparation, or the preparation of baby formula if the landlord has previously denied access to a public community water system for the purpose of replacing the property-owner's side of a lead service line. The bill also includes an enforcement mechanism to help ensure that the provisions of this bill are implemented properly and promptly.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our comments on this important matter.

² Horowitz, Ben. NJ Advance Media. "Why 11 N.J. cities have more lead-affected kids than Flint, Michigan." http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2016/02/11_cities_in_jersey_have_more_lead-affected_kids_t.html