



Advocates for Children and Youth is a statewide non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. We champion solutions to child welfare, education, health, and juvenile justice issues, positioning us to influence the full spectrum of youth experiences. This multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live.

Testimony before the Environmental Matters Committee

In SUPPORT of

House Bill 304- Environment- Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing—Elevated Blood Lead Levels

Melissa Rock, 0-3 Strategic Initiative Director, Advocates for Children and Youth

March 2, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 304- Environment- Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing—Elevated Blood Lead Levels. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

Surveys from 2016 estimate that 15 to 22 million people across the country have lead water pipes.¹ According to the Center for Disease Control, in 2016, approximately 500,000 children, ages 1 to 5 had blood levels at or above $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$.² However, as Child Trends points out, "**no level of lead in the blood is considered safe.**"³ In fact, research shows that even lower levels of lead in the blood (3-5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$) "can damage the brain, leading to impaired memory and executive functioning skills."⁴ It is also important to note that not all children are equally impacted by lead poisoning. Children of color are more likely to experience lead poisoning than white, non-Hispanic children.⁵ (See the back of this testimony to see Child Trend's graph illuminating the racial disparities.)

Children who are lead poisoned are **7 times more likely to drop out of school** and **6 times more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.**⁶ Given the racial disparities in who experiences lead poisoning, this is another driver of the racial disparities in educational outcomes and criminal justice system involvement. Learning disabilities that can affect children who have been lead poisoned include: violent, aggressive behavior; speech delays; ADD; hyperactivity; diminished IQ; hearing and memory problems; and reduced motor control and balance.⁷ Currently, case management is not available to families with children unless that child's lead level is greater than or equal to 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. SB 801 expands the eligibility for services by lowering that lead level to 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. This expansion is critical to better meet the needs of Maryland's children.

We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 304 to ensure that we are providing services to more children who have experienced lead poisoning to avoid the lifelong impacts the lead poisoning can have.

¹ Cornwell, David A.; Brown, Richard A.; Via, Steve H., "National Survey of Lead Service Line Occurrence," American Water Works Association Journal, (April 2016).

² <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/united-states-can-eliminate-childhood-lead-exposure/>

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

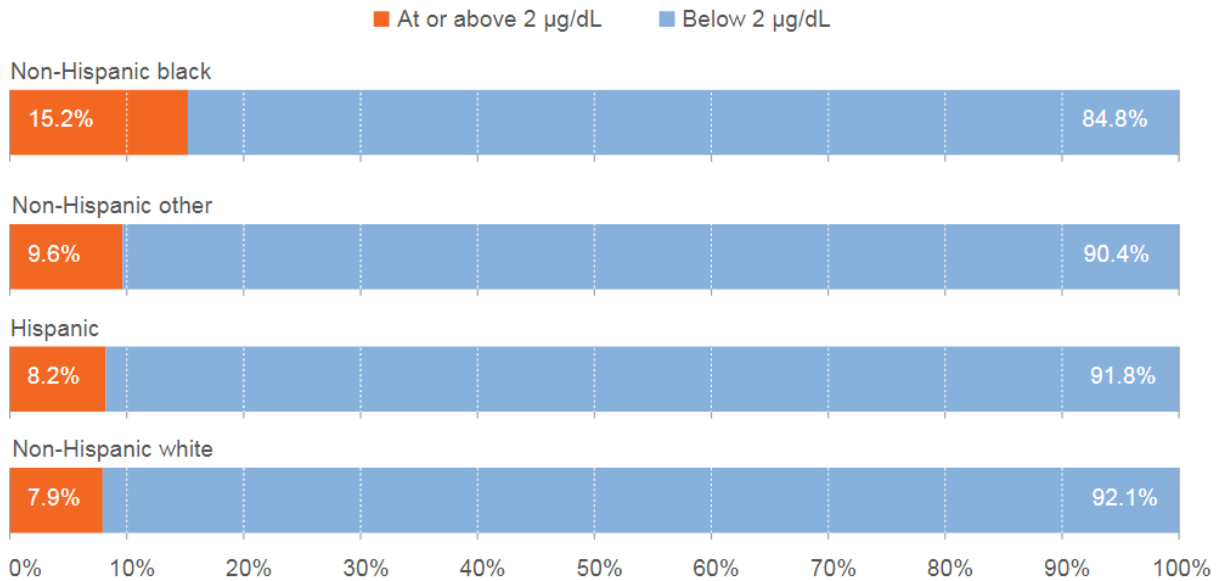
⁵ Id.

⁶ <http://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/home-health-hazards/lead>

⁷ Id.

Black children are more likely to have higher blood lead levels

Share of children ages 1 to 5 with blood lead levels below and above 2 µg/dL by race and ethnicity, 2011–2014



Source: Altarum analysis of National Center for Health Statistics, "National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011–2012," accessed May 26, 2017, [link](#); and National Center for Health Statistics, "National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2013–2014," accessed May 26, 2017, [link](#)

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/united-states-can-eliminate-childhood-lead-exposure/>. Citing: Source: Altarum analysis of National Center for Health Statistics, "National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011–2012," accessed May 26, 2017, [link](#); and National Center for Health Statistics, "National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2013–2014," accessed May 26, 2017, [link](#)