



*We improve the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs that tackle disparities and close equity gaps to ensure that there is an opportunity for all our most vulnerable to thrive.*

## **Testimony before the Environmental and Transportation Committee**

### **In SUPPORT of House Bill 1253- Environment - Drinking Water Outlets in School Buildings - Elevated Level of Lead and Grant Program**

**Melissa Rock, 0-3 Strategic Initiative Director, Advocates for Children and Youth  
March 6, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1253- Environment- - Drinking Water Outlets in School Buildings - Elevated Level of Lead and Grant Program. 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.<sup>1</sup> According to the Center for Disease Control, in 2016, approximately 500,000 children, ages 1 to 5 had blood levels at or above µg/dl.<sup>2</sup> However, as Child Trends points out, "**no level of lead in the blood is considered safe.**"<sup>3</sup> In fact, research shows that even lower levels of lead in the blood (3-5 µg/dl) "can damage the brain, leading to impaired memory and executive functioning skills."<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> (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.**<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> HB 1253 creates a grant program to assist local school districts with the costs of ensuring their water is safe for their students to drink.

**We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1253 to help eliminate the exposure to lead poisoning that Maryland's children currently face in their schools and to help avoid the lifelong impacts the lead poisoning can have.**

---

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

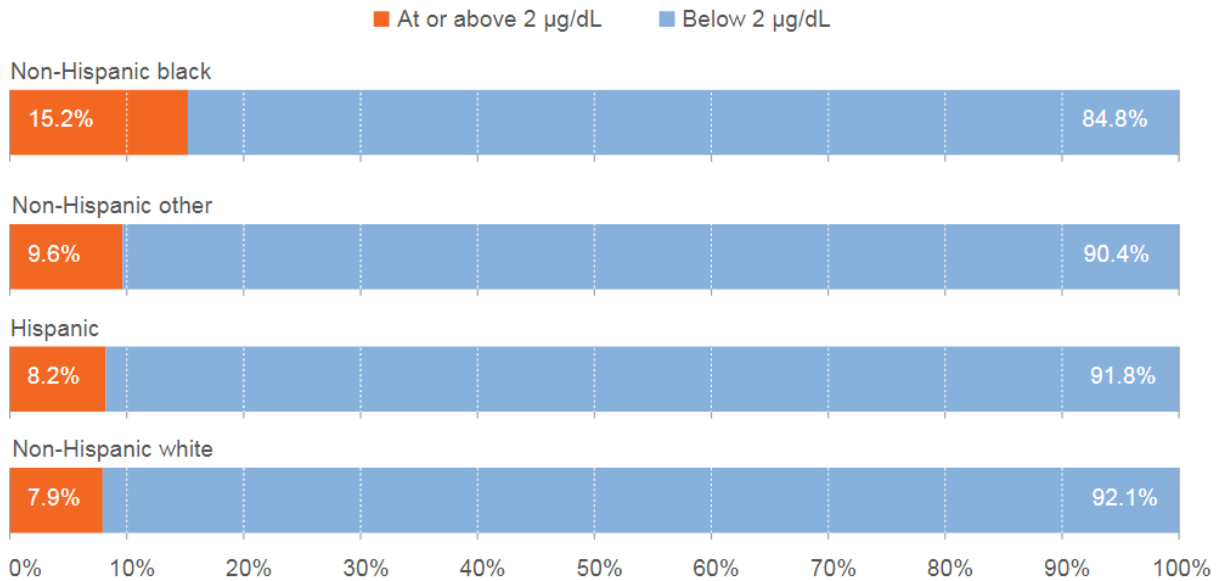
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/home-health-hazards/lead>

<sup>7</sup> 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](#)