

Testimony in Support of HB 4340, 4341, 4342

An act to provide Filtered Drinking Water Stations for Lead in Schools and Childcare centers in Michigan, to the House Committee on Health Policy.

Submitted by: Meli Garcia, Regional Environmental Health Organizer, Ecology Center

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Dear Chair Rogers, Majority Vice Chair Whitsett, Minority Vice Chair, Rep VanderWall and Committee Member,

My name is Meli Garcia, and I'm the Regional Environmental Health Organizer for the Ecology Center and mother of two children. I'm here to testify in support of HB 4340, 4341, 4342 to provide filtered drinking water stations in Michigan schools and childcare facilities. Thank you for holding this hearing on these important bills. As a mom, protecting my kids from lead poisoning is at the top of my priorities. I can control lead exposures in my home but not in my kids' schools.

Kids spend the majority of their days in school and child care centers. The debilitating and costly effects of lead on these children is detrimental. Children and adolescents' brains are still rapidly developing during their school years. Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that causes irreversible damage to a child's brain. Lead robs children of their earning potential by lowering their IQ, puts them at higher risk of juvenile delinquency and crime by increasing aggressive behaviors and reducing impulse control. All of these factors make it harder for children exposed to lead to learn and succeed in school.

But, there is good news, lead poisoning is entirely preventable. HB 4340, 4341, 4342 would protect children from lead exposure in the drinking water of their schools and childcare facilities by requiring the installation of filtered drinking water stations there.

School water is more likely to be contaminated with lead than the water in our homes because of the time that water spends dormant in the pipes at schools. During breaks and weekends lead leaches into the water when corrosion control chemicals lose their effectiveness over time.

We know that the lead in the school's water might not always show up each time a faucet is tested. We know that ripping out old pipes and faucets and simply replacing them with new ones doesn't stop the problem because lead is still allowed in plumbing at a low level. The only way to protect our kids is to provide them with safe filtered drinking water via filtered drinking water stations that meet NSF/ANSI standard 53 for lead in water.

By passing House Bills HB 4340, 4341, 4342 we can give schools the guidance and tools they need to choose and purchase filtered drinking water stations. I hope that you will vote in favor of these bills and encourage your colleagues to support them in the House.

Meli Garcia