

June 20, 2017

Dear Senate and House Budget Leadership,

We are writing in support of the budget proviso recommended by Rep. Gerry Pollet and regarding Department of Health (DOH) guidance and protocols for testing for lead in drinking water and drinking water fixtures in public and private schools. Additionally, we urge you to support funding for schools to remove lead-bearing parts and fixtures and to install filters to reduce lead exposure.

Lead is a potent neurotoxin and especially damaging to children – impairing how they learn, grow and behave. We have known for some time that high levels of lead can cause severe health impacts – including anemia, kidney disease, abnormal brain function and even death.

Yet the medical science now confirms that even low levels of lead can cause permanent damage to our children. According to EPA, “In children, low levels of [lead] exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells.”<sup>1</sup>

Last summer, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concluded that “[e]xtensive and compelling evidence now indicates that lead-associated cognitive deficits and behavioral problems can occur at blood lead concentrations below 5 µg/dL” (micrograms per cubic deciliter), or one part per billion.<sup>2</sup>

*The science now makes clear that there is no safe level of lead exposure for our children.*

Given the high toxicity of lead to children, the most health-protective policy is simply to “get the lead out” of our schools and pre-schools. This involves proactively removing lead-bearing parts from schools’ drinking water systems — from service lines to faucets and fixtures — and installing filters certified to remove lead at every tap used for drinking or cooking.

Yet, this prevention work will take time to complete. In the meantime, schools should also immediately begin regular and proper testing of all water outlets used for drinking or cooking and promptly remove from service those outlets where lead is detected. Given the science on the health impacts of lead exposure for children, state officials and schools should adopt a stronger standard and action level for lead and follow the AAP recommendation of one part per billion. And schools should provide the public with easy access to all testing data and the status of remediation plans.

The budget provision introduced by Rep. Pollet is an important step in this direction and one that should be adopted by the legislature. This budget language would direct DOH to develop guidance and recommendations for schools to take action to reduce lead when test results exceed the maximum level recommended by AAP, and recommendations for communicating test results to parents and the community, including that there is no safe level of lead in water, as the science makes clear.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water,” EPA.gov, updated December 2016, accessible at <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-informationabout-lead-drinking-water>.

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, Prevention of Childhood Lead Toxicity, (policy statement), July 2016, page 3, available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2016/06/16/peds.2016-1493.full.pdf>.

In addition, it is critical that you provide funding for schools to remediate and get the lead out.

We urge you to adopt this budget language and to support funding for schools to remove lead-bearing parts and fixtures and to install filters. These important and protective steps will have an immediate positive impact on the health of our children and their development.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



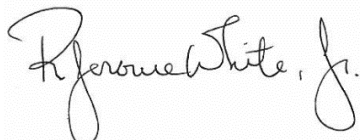
Bruce Speight  
Executive Director  
Environment Washington

## Laurie Valeriano

Laurie Valeriano  
Executive Director  
Toxic Free Future

## LeeAnne Beres

LeeAnne Beres  
Executive Director  
Earth Ministry



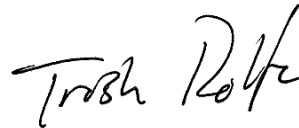
Jerry White  
Executive Director  
Spokane Riverkeeper




Mindy Roberts  
Puget Sound Director  
WA Environmental Council



Crina Hoyer  
Executive Director  
RE-SOURCES



Trish Rolfe  
Executive Director  
Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP)



Samara Parra  
Civic Engagement Coordinator  
One America



Melissa Malott  
Executive Director  
Citizens for a Healthy Bay



Steve Gilbert  
Board Member  
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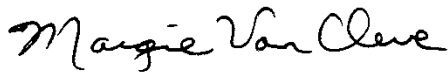
Mike Peterson  
Executive Director  
The Lands Council



Chris Wierzbicki  
Executive Director  
Future Wise



Heather Trim  
Executive Director  
Zero Waste Washington



Margie Van Cleve  
Conservation Committee Chair  
Sierra Club Washington State Chapter

**Felipe Rodriguez-Flores**

Felipe Rodriguez-Flores  
Director of Civic Engagement and Advocacy  
Progreso-Latino Community Fund