

January 16, 2020

The Honorable Justin Henry
Superintendent Michael Hinojosa
Dallas Independent School District
9400 N. Central Expressway
Dallas, TX 75231

Dear President Henry and Superintendent Hinojosa,

We are writing today to urge Dallas Independent School District to take additional steps to get the lead out of school drinking water.

We appreciate the steps DISD took beginning in 2016 to voluntarily test water quality at schools and remediate at taps in eight schools where very high levels of lead were found. Unfortunately, your testing revealed toxic lead in an additional 102 schools where we understand no remediation has taken place¹.

A potent neurotoxin, lead affects how our children learn, grow, and behave. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (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." In fact, medical researchers estimate that more than 24 million children in America will lose IQ points due to low levels of lead.

As you know, there is no safe level of lead. The latest edition of the EPA's 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Child Care Centers recommends that schools reduce lead to the "lowest possible concentration," while the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that schools keep lead concentrations in water no greater than 1 ppb.

According to Environment Texas' review² of your testing results, at least 69,000 children at 102 schools are still being potentially exposed to lead levels above 1 ppb. As a result, we urge DISD to take immediate action to get the lead out, including:

1. Shutting off dangerous taps: Taps used for drinking or cooking that test above 1 ppb of lead should be shut off until remediated, consistent with recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

1

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2019/03/21/texas-schools-have-dangerous-levels-of-lead-in-drinking-water-advocates-say/>

² <https://environmenttexas.org/sites/environment/files/reports/Lead%20Testing%20Results.pdf>

2. Installing filters now: Installing filters on all taps used for drinking and cooking is an easy, low-cost step schools can take to start protecting children immediately. Make sure the filters are installed at "point of use" and certified to remove lead.

3. Replacing pipes, plumbing, fountains and/or fixtures that contain lead: This is the most effective, permanent solution to prevent contamination of the water our children drink at school, or elsewhere.

4. Requiring ongoing testing: Regularly test all outlets used for drinking or cooking. Use proper sampling methods that are more likely to detect lead contamination.

5. Communication: Plans and actual steps taken to prevent lead contamination, along with all test results, should be made easily accessible — including online — to parents, teachers and the public. Outlets should clearly indicate when filters are due to be replaced.

We request the opportunity to meet with you soon to discuss the development of an action plan to get the lead out at all DISD facilities.

Sincerely,

Luke Metzger
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Director, Texas Public Interest Research Group (TexPIRG)

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