



January 12, 2022

Superintendent Millard House II
Houston Independent School District
4400 West 18th
Houston, TX 77092

CC: Board of Trustees

Dear Superintendent House,

We write to ask you to take action to ensure healthy hydration and safe drinking water for all children, faculty, and staff in the district.

As you know, water is vital for kids' health - for their muscles, joints, tissues, digestive system, and keeping their growing bodies hydrated. That's why it's so important that children have access to safe drinking water at school, where they spend most of their waking hours learning and playing.

Unfortunately, testing commissioned by HISD in 2016 found lead in the drinking water in an alarming 84 percent of district schools. The district has said it fixed drinking fountains where lead was found at 20 parts per billion or higher, citing outdated guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)¹.

However, lead is so toxic even at low levels that the EPA's most recent "*3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water*" guidance sets a goal of having no lead in drinking water and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a standard of 1 part per billion (ppb).

Lead threatens our kids' health, especially how they learn, grow and behave. According to the 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.*" Medical researchers estimate that more than 24 million

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<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Lead-levels-threaten-school-water-10973443.php>

children in America today risk losing IQ points due to low levels of lead. They have also linked low levels of lead to ADHD, antisocial behaviors and depression.

To ensure safe drinking water at school, the school district should proactively replace all fountains with water bottle/hydration stations equipped with filters that remove lead. This solution eliminates one common source of lead (fountains) and captures lead coming from plumbing or pipes. Moreover, kids tend to drink more water when they have access to hydration stations, so there's an added health benefit to this solution. These hydration stations should be installed at a ratio of 1 per 100 students and staff. They should have filters certified to meet NSF/ANSI standards 53 for lead reduction and 42 for fine particulate, and indicator lights so parents and teachers can see when the filters need to be replaced.

We would like to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss this proposal to protect our children's health.

Sincerely,

Rev. James L Caldwell
Founder/Director, Coalition of Community Organizations

Claire Ganschow
Campaign Associate, Texas Public Interest Research Group (TexPIRG)

Luke Metzger
Executive Director, Environment Texas

Michael Lewis
Clean Air and Water Advocate, Environment Texas

Dr. Denae King
Texas Southern University

Shannon Thomas
Environmental Defense Fund

German Ibanez
Chair - Governmental Affairs, Houston Climate Movement

Ben Hirsch
Co-Director, West Street Recovery

Angelica Razo
Texas State Director, Mi Familia Vota

Julia Lewis

Co-General Coordinator, Houston Youth Climate Strike

Dr. Sylvia Dee
Assistant Professor of Earth Sciences, Rice University

Elida Castillo
Program Director, Chispa Texas

Iris Gonzalez
Coalition Director, The Coalition for Environment, Equity and Resilience

Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud
Executive Director, Bayou City Waterkeeper

Dr. Bob Randall
Year Round Gardening for Metro Houston

Dr. Sarat Munjuluri
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Emily Weems
President, Field Elementary PTO

Dr. Stephanie Thomas
Public Citizen

Lindsey MacLeod
President Elect, Oak Forest Elementary PTA

Daniella Flanagan
CEO, Mint Chip Productions

Molly Cook
Candidate for Texas Senate, District 15

Jane Foreman
Community Voices for Public Education