

Greetings esteemed Senate Leaders,

Thank you for this opportunity to come before you regarding an issue that is of great concern for us all. I would like to thank my colleagues at the Newburgh Clean water Project for their relentless efforts that has brought us here today and The restorative Center for Social Justice for hosting the community circles, giving space for neighbors and friends to share their experiences and frustrations. I would also like to thank the folks at the Orange County Health Department and Cornerstone Family Healthcare facility for their continuous support of families and children who have been and still are affected by Lead Poisoning.

March 6, 1997 was one of the happiest days of my life: I gave birth to my first child, a beautiful baby girl we named Ragi. My husband and I decided that I would not return to the workforce right away, but instead remain at home with our brand new bundle of joy. a couple of years later, I was ready to go back to work and found a local daycare that was perfect for our family needs. Along with the application the daycare requested that new applicants have their blood lead levels checked. As new parents we happily complied and took our daughter Ragi to her pediatrician. A short time later, I received a call from the Orange County Department with Ragi's lead level result. It was not good. In fact, Her number was so high that I was instructed to take her to our local hospital right away. I called, no actually, I paged my husband and took Ragi to St. Luke's Hospital and she was immediately admitted. We were told that due to the high level of lead in ragi's blood she would need chelation, a treatment used to remove metals like lead, mercury and iron from her system. Lead in her blood? Chelation? How? Like most parents we had so many questions and the team of health professionals explained the procedure. The First step was to insert an IV into our infant's hand that would remain there for 7 days, 168 hours, 604,800 seconds, each one seeming like an eternity, We are ever so grateful for the care we received as a family unit and every individual that played a role part in well being and healthy recovery of my then only child.

My story unfortunately is not uncommon. You could go to almost any street in my beloved City Of Newburgh New York and people can recount similar experiences. Our city is old and is desperate for updated infrastructure. Having a new lead line installed in your home is a good start, but is not enough to ensure clean, safe drinking water. Yes, clean water is a Human Right, but to eradicate lead is very costly. How much is too much to invest in the health of children today and the unborn citizens to come. Let's be a part of not only the conversation about clean water, but let's also be the change we want to see in the world.

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