



Testimony of Joshua Klainberg
Senior Vice President, New York League of Conservation Voters
Before the New York State Senate Committees on Health
and Housing, Construction and Community Development
November 30, 2021

My name is Joshua Klainberg and I am the Senior Vice President at the New York League of Conservation Voters. NYLCV is a longtime member of the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning and a Steering Committee Member of Lead Free Kids New York. NYLCV has worked with its allies over the past two decades to pass landmark legislation in the New York City Council and the New York State Legislature to protect children from lead poisoning. NYLCV was a co-author to the 2018 report [Lead Loopholes: How Lax Enforcement of New York City's Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Laws Lets Landlords off the Hook and Leaves Children at Risk](#) and author of ["5 is the New 15": A Case for Reducing the Action Level for Lead in New York State's Public School Drinking Water Program from 15 parts per billion \(ppb\) to 5 ppb](#). Thank you to Chairs Rivera and Kavanagh and members of the Senate for the opportunity to testify today.

Experts at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [World Health Organization](#) agree that there is no safe level of lead exposure. Lead exposure can cause irreparable neurological damage, learning disabilities, and decreased cognitive ability.

Earlier this year NYLCV released a report titled "5 is the New 15" which made recommendations on how New York could become the biggest state in the nation with the most protective health standard for public school drinking water.

Thanks to Senator Rivera and the entire state legislature, we are closer than ever to having legislation enacted into law that will strengthen the 2016 Safe School Drinking Water Act by reducing the lead action level from 15 parts per billion (ppb) to 5 ppb, a step which brings us closer to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation of less than 1 ppb. We hope that Governor Hochul signs this bill soon to protect more students and staff from lead exposure in their drinking water.

New York State now needs to turn its attention to lead service lines in a big way. Lead service lines delivering drinking water to smaller, older homes are one of the most common ways in which New Yorkers are exposed to lead. There are at least 360,000 lead pipes statewide with at least 137,000 in NYC. The total cost to replace lead service lines in New York State ranges from \$1.8 billion to \$3.6 billion. The reason why we don't have a clearer idea of the size, scope, and cost of the problem is that we do not have a centralized inventory of how many lead pipes are

actually out there and where they are located. As the saying goes, we cannot manage what we cannot measure, and the sooner we can get the data, the more promptly we can deploy existing state funds and future federal funds earmarked to get the lead pipes out of the ground

It turns out that this data should be easy to come by rather quickly, but it may require action by the state legislature. The adopted 2019-20 state budget added a provision to Public Health Law Section 1151 requiring that the Annual Water Supply Statement provided by the water providers to their customers include "General information regarding lead pipes reasonably known to be located within the water system." While this requirement has been on the books for two years now, this information is neither easily available nor is it centrally located in a single public database. NYLCV would like to urge that legislature to work with advocates to come up with a plan to ensure that this data becomes publically available very quickly so we can craft a program to effectively deal with lead service lines just as effectively as we all worked together on lead in school drinking water.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.