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Group Letter to EPA on Lead & Copper Pipe Rule

Please sign this group letter supporting the EPA proposed rule to address lead pipes.

DEADLINE: FRIDAY, FEB. 2ND AT 12PM ET (NOON)

THE TEXT OF THE LETTER IS BELOW:

We, the undersigned organizations, commend the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the recently proposed rule to address lead in tap water contamination crisis. This is a long overdue step toward ensuring all Americans have access to safe, affordable drinking water that is essential to life and good health.

Everyone deserves access to safe, affordable drinking water – yet tens of millions of people in this country are drinking from taps contaminated with lead. Your agency **recently estimated** that there are 9.2 million lead pipes carrying water to homes spread across all 50 states. However, as we have seen in Flint, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey, it is often low-income and communities of color that suffer at the highest rates from the scourge of lead contaminated drinking water. An **analysis** of EPA data from 2016 to 2019 showed there was a correlation between a community's racial composition and drinking water

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violations. This meant that water systems serving the most marginalized communities were also most likely to be in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Many of the physical health benefits of removing lead service lines are widely known. We are familiar with the numerous studies that have demonstrated the link between children's exposure to lead and cognitive development, learning difficulties, and behavioral issues. Yet, in addition to the long-known risks such as damage to children's brains and certain cancers, a recently issued [Scientific Statement](#) by the American Heart Association, and EPA's own scientific assessment, demonstrated that there was sufficient evidence to show that exposure to lead is linked to cardiovascular disease, including stroke and heart attack in adults. In communities of color, the risk of heart disease is especially high, likely due in part to greater lead exposure. Replacing the nation's lead pipes will help ensure all people have safe water to drink so they can live healthier lives.

Removing lead service lines also brings significant health costs savings - as in avoided health cost - associated with getting rid of lead pipes. The EPA and the utility trade associations in the past have estimated the total cost of removing all 9.2 million lead service lines nationwide would be in the range of \$46 to \$56 billion. Yet, according to a recent [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health study](#), the total health savings would be orders of magnitude higher. An analysis of the data by one of lead authors of the study forecasts tens of billions in annual health benefits from removing all lead pipes, with total health savings of \$786 billion over the next 35 years.

For these reasons we support the need for, and the improvements articulated in, this new rule. We agree with establishing a 10-year deadline for water systems to replace lead service lines as well as requiring water utilities to improve

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testing requirements, and to complete inventories of lead service lines is necessary to help homeowners and renters know the extent of the problem in their communities. However, this rule falls short in some important ways that we believe will continue to disproportionately impact low-income and communities of color, and harm children.

The EPA should consider additional improvements that will serve to ensure a greater number of families benefit from the removal of lead service lines. For instance, the rule should

- Include language that requires water systems to bear the cost of fully replacing all lead service lines, thereby eliminating the financial burden that will likely fall to those least able to pay. This will be especially important for families that live in rental housing as landlords may refuse to assume the expense or do the work but pass the cost onto those families in the form of rent increases. The federal government has already provided some funds to help utilities shoulder these costs.
- Remove the provisions allowing water utilities to seek extensions beyond 10 years to remove lead pipes. Ten years is more than sufficient time to do the work necessary to protect vulnerable communities from continued exposure to lead; allowing water utilities to extend this work for 30 or 40 years is unconscionable and merely exacerbates environmental injustices.
- Do better with respect to the level of lead exposure allowed by law and should consider the recommendation by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) of 1 parts per billion.
- Lastly, require utilities to comprehensively and regularly test all water at outlets at all schools and childcare centers, or, at least, work with these facilities to help them install water filtration systems. This step would create the

incentive for expeditious resolution of lead issues and reduce costs.

These are just some of the recommendations we believe EPA should consider to strengthen this rule. With these improvements, the agency will bring the benefits of clean drinking water to many more families, regardless of income, zip code, race or ethnicity.

Congress has taken an important step in providing billions of dollars of sorely needed funding for lead service line replacement, however without a stronger and more protective rule, such funding will be undermined, and communities will continue to struggle to get their lines replaced. Please do not miss this critical opportunity to build on the progress the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress have made and finalize a rule to protect communities across the country from lead in their drinking water.

Sincerely,

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