

RES 23-016

Wilmington, Delaware
April 6, 2023

#0289

Sponsor:

Council
Member
Darby

Co-Sponsor:

Council
President
Congo

WHEREAS, 16 Del. Laws, C. 26, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act, and 16 Del. Laws, C. 30M provide for the protection of Delawareans, particularly tender-age children, from preventable lead poisoning. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended some guidelines to identify and follow up with children who are exposed to lead; and

WHEREAS, in late 2020, Delaware's Division of Public Health and the Department of Education received \$209,000 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Voluntary Lead Testing in Schools and Child Care grant program to test water outlets in the State's schools for lead contamination; and

WHEREAS, the Division of Public Health lead sampling found that 22 schools in Delaware have at least one water source with levels of lead that exceed the EPA's 15 parts per billion (ppb) threshold for remediation. An additional 23 schools were recommended for continuous monitoring of lead from their water sources because of elevated lead levels; and

WHEREAS, lead is a neurotoxic substance. There is no safe blood level of lead in the human body. Lead from drinking water or other sources causes serious health complications. CDC found that children who are exposed to elevated levels of lead measured in micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (>5 ug/dl) are at increased risk of cognitive and behavioral problems during development; and

WHEREAS, having an elevated blood lead level over time is associated with body weakness, high blood pressure, anemia, stroke, and damage to the kidneys and brain. Excessive lead exposure can be fatal; and

WHEREAS, both the risks and impacts of exposure to lead carry serious implications for economic and racial disparities. Most lead materials were banned in the 1980s, but 57% of Delaware homes and many of the infrastructures were built before 1979. Three of the ten zip codes with the highest childhood lead poisoning risk are located in Wilmington. In Delaware, children of color across most racial categories are more likely to experience poverty and live

in older houses than their White counterparts, which places them at higher risk for lead poisoning. The National Center for Health Statistics has identified patterns of racial disparities in exposure to lead poisoning among children nationwide. Samples of average blood lead levels were found to be higher among non-Hispanic, Black children when compared to non-Hispanic White children; and

WHEREAS, the potential for community exposure to lead in our schools is particularly troubling. The State's universal lead testing and monitoring programs target children under 24 months, older children and adults are less likely to discover that they have been exposed to lead through routine medical visits. In youth populations, lead has been linked to lower intelligence quotients (IQ) and attention spans, learning disabilities, poor classroom performance, hyperactivity, behavioral problems, impaired growth, hearing loss, and increased juvenile crime rates. These health effects would further exacerbate existing educational inequities while fueling the cycles of disadvantage that our City, State, and nation work so diligently to combat; and

WHEREAS, prevention, early detection, and treatment are key to lead poisoning harm reduction. The EPA requires Delaware schools to follow the 3Ts of training, testing, and taking action when lead levels are found to be elevated as a stipulation of the Voluntary Lead Testing in Schools and Child Care grant program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that this Legislative body urges the Delaware General Assembly, the Division of Public Health, and the Department of Education to coordinate with school districts and affected schools to remove lead contamination from water sources; inform parents, faculty, and staff members of their potential lead exposure; and develop a definitive plan for testing impacted individuals for lead toxicity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Wilmington City Council is strongly in favor of continuous monitoring of school water sources for potential contamination, as well as a plan of action to remediate future contamination, communicate with the public, and test affected populations.

Passed by City Council,
April 6, 2023

ATTEST: Akira Grenardo
Deputy City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution urges the Delaware General Assembly, the Division of Public Health, and the Department of Education to coordinate with school districts and affected schools to remove lead contamination from water sources; inform parents, faculty, and staff members of their potential lead exposure; and develop a definitive plan for testing impacted individuals for lead toxicity. It also expresses strong favor for ongoing monitoring of school water sources for potential contamination, and a plan of action to address any future incidents of community exposure.