February 13, 2023

To: Kansas House Committee on Education
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education,

Thank you for this opportunity to write in support of HB 2142, the "Get the Lead Out of School Drinking Water Act," with the proposed NRDC amendments, as an important and impactful step in protecting Kansas children from lead exposure in their school drinking water.

Data collected from states, cities and school districts across the United States show that detectable amounts of lead are present in drinking water in schools. This is true for rural and urban areas; for schools of varying sizes and populations; and for schools that are connected to different types of water systems. This means that children across the country are exposed to lead in their school drinking water.

There is no safe level of lead exposure for children, and even low levels of exposure can cause life-long irreversible damage to their health and development[1]. Lowering the action level for remediating lead in water to 1 part per billion (ppb), as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics[2], is a powerful first step to address lead exposure through water.

Lead enters drinking water systems primarily through plumbing materials throughout the distribution system, including pipes, solders, and the fixtures or faucets found within the schools themselves, making lead exposure through drinking water a particularly pervasive and difficult problem to solve. HB 2142 will help tackle this problem in the school buildings in which our children spend a significant portion of their time. The bill's requirement to install hydration stations with filters certified to remove lead in every school that has fixtures testing at lead concentrations over the 1 ppb levels is important to ensuring that students can have access to drinking water in their school that will not expose them to lead.

It is also important to note that "lead-free" plumbing materials are not truly lead-free. "Lead-free" plumbing materials manufactured after 2014 are still allowed to have a weighted average of up to 0.2-0.25% leaded materials in them (depending on the type of material)[3]. These reduced-lead materials are still able to leach lead into the drinking water above the 1 ppb level, as was shown in a 2018 study conducted by researchers at Virginia Tech[4]. Thus, newer school

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). Health Effects of Lead Exposure. https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/health-effects.htm
[2] AAP Council on Environmental Health. Prevention of Childhood Lead Toxicity. (2016) *Pediatrics*, *138(1):* e20161493. https://doi-org.ezp.slu.edu/10.1542/peds.2016-1493
[3] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Use of Lead Free Pipes, Fittings, Fixtures, Solder and Flux for Drinking Water," last updated July 11, 2017, https://www.epa.gov/dwstandardsregulations/use-lead-free-pipes-fittings-fixtures-solder-and-flux-drinking-water
[4] Parks, J., Pieper, K. J., Katner, A., Tang, M., & Edwards, M. (2018). Potential Challenges Meeting the American Academy of Pediatrics' Lead in School Drinking Water Goal of 1 ug/L. *Corrosion Communications*, *74(8)*, 914 – 917.

buildings with newer plumbing materials still have the potential to leach lead into drinking water, further exposing children.

Relying on testing for lead in drinking water systems also has the potential to leave students unprotected. Lead contamination in water is highly variable based on a number of factors that can change over time, so each test for lead is only a snapshot in time – and the lead level could be entirely different the next time it is tested. This makes the installation of hydration stations with filters certified to remove lead even more important to effectively protect children from lead exposure through drinking water until truly 100% lead-free plumbing materials exist.

All children should have access to safe, clean drinking water in their schools. I support this bill's efforts to help make that a reality in Kansas.

Sincerely,

Rachel Rimmerman
Ph.D. Candidate, Public and Social Policy
Director of Business and Outreach, WATER Institute
Saint Louis University
Rachel.rimmerman@slu.edu