

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™
NYS AAP, District II, A coalition of Chapters 1, 2 & 3



May 28, 2021

Memo of Support A.160B/S.2122A (Rivera/ Gottfried)

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to school potable water testing

The New York American Academy of Pediatrics, representing more than 5,000 pediatricians across the state, supports A. 160B/S. 2122A (Rivera/ Gottfried).

As pediatricians we know that there is no safe level of lead for children. We also know that schools should be safe environments for all children. For years we have worked with schools across the state to make school buildings safe for children, passing laws and supporting regulations to remove toxins like asbestos, and unsafe cleaning chemicals. We have also worked to assure that building materials and furniture in the schools are not toxic to young children and teens. This bill, which we strongly support, would require testing every three years for lead in public school drinking water, guarantee free and safe drinking water for all children, remove the possibility of exemption from testing, lower the lead action level from 15ppb to 5ppb, and ensure laboratory reports are disclosed publicly.

The research on lead toxins is clear. Lead poisoning directly impacts the brains of young children and causes multiple developmental delays. Lead poisoning can also have a negative health impact on children through their teens. The simple truth is that lead is a poison. It should not be in our school buildings, childcare sites, playgrounds, or homes. This bill will go a long way to remove lead from school facilities. It will help protect New York's children from lead poisoning.

In 2016, 82% of New York schools tested found at least one drinking water source above the State action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead. A. 160B/S. 2122A would lower the standard to 5 ppb, closer to current scientific best practice. Presently, testing is only required "periodically," but this legislation would require testing every three years to further secure the health of all students.

Current state law exempts schools from testing if their pipe materials are comprised of less than 0.25% lead, making them “lead-free.” A. 160B/S. 2122A would remove exemptions for these schools. It would also require lab reports to be accessible and posted online so that parents know the safety status of their children’s school drinking water.

The New York American Academy of Pediatrics urges passage of A. 160B/S. 2122A now. We cannot have children return to school in September knowing that we have done nothing to reduce the threat of lead poisoning in their school buildings.

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