



VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

MEMO

From the Desk of Jay Nichols

The Vermont Principals' Association supports school leaders to improve the equity and quality of educational opportunities for all students.

Written Testimony Submitted to House Education

March 17, 2019

Dear House Education Committee Members,

Thank you for accepting written testimony on S.40 - Lead Testing and Mitigation Bill. I am in Washington D.C. this week meeting with the offices of our Congressional delegation.

Major Points on S.40

- Our principals spend more time in school buildings than any other individual - we fully understand and support the need for safe drinking water for students and staff.
- We do not have a stance on what the allowed parts per billion should be in terms of lead in the drinking water - however, we firmly believe that any testing and mitigation costs should be borne by the State. If this is a public health concern than it should be addressed by state government - not through local school budgets.
- School systems have not budgeted resources for lead testing and/or mitigation. Additionally, the amount of monies that were discussed in Senate Ed. as expected mitigation costs are completely unrealistic. Unless we settle on a much higher parts per billion number the cost are likely to be much higher.
- The lower the standard for parts per billion the higher the cost for mitigation. We keep hearing that mitigation and testing will not be that costly - if we go to 3 parts per billion or something even lower than that you can expect immense cost. There are schools that do not even have water coming into the school that will meet that requirement. In many places, just changing fixtures will not suffice. Some schools may need extensive piping replacing. Some schools will not be able to address the issue at all because the municipal water they have may be above the minimum threshold as it enters the building.
- I question whether all schools have the staff resources to provide the supports that will be necessary just to do testing and simple mitigation. I also question whether the state agencies have the time and resources to complete testing in the timeframe the bill envisions.
- If we go to three parts per billion and allow bottled water to come in at five parts per billion that seems to be counter intuitive. Especially when we have a problem in this country and world with plastic bottles. Having water filling stations at schools with fixtures delivering local water at the same five parts per billion or lower would seem to make more sense. To require schools to buy water that might have MORE lead in it than the local water defies common sense.

Respectfully,

Jay Nichols