



April 20, 2021

Audience: House Committee on Public Education

House Bill: 605 by Barbara Gervin-Hawkins

Testimony: Mike Marshall, President, Texas Mold Assessors and Remediators Association

“Good Morning Representatives, my name is Mike Marshall, and I am the president of the Texas Mold Assessors and Remediators Association.

I’m honored to be with you today representing nearly 5,000 industry licenses in the State of Texas. We have worked closely over the past two years with members of the legislative branch not only keep our industry regulated

But to protect the health, safety, and financial well-being of the 29.8 million Texan consumers that we all serve.

On behalf of TMARA, I am here today in support of HB 605 - The Lead in School Water Bill.

You may be wondering why the president of an association that represents the mold industry is speaking on a bill regarding lead in school water sources.

Many of us on the assessment and laboratory analysis side of the industry are not only experts in mold assessments and testing but also perform testing for a number of other indoor environmental contaminants that include, asbestos, volatile organic compounds, water contaminants and lead. Our members perform thousands of indoor assessments and testing for these contaminants that include water source testing for many large commercial buildings, residential homes, and schools.

In our research of the many documents published by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Center for Disease Control, we have summarized the following with regard to HB 605:

Lead is a toxic metal that is harmful to human health and there is no safe blood lead level established for children. In the human body, toxic lead can substitute for healthy calcium, which is a mineral that strengthens the bones. Lead is carried in the body through the bloodstream and can do significant damage to the nervous system and brain. Some lead can be excreted by the body, however what is not excreted is absorbed into the bones, where it can collect for a lifetime. In children, even low levels of exposure have been linked to learning disabilities, hearing problems, hyperactivity disorders, growth inhibition, and the overall function of their blood cells.

It is also important to note, the EPA’s new Lead and Copper Rule better protects children and communities from the risks of lead exposure by extending regulations to children at schools and childcare facilities, working to get the lead out of our nation’s drinking water, and empowering communities through information. Improvements under the new rule include: Using science-based testing protocols to find more sources of lead in drinking water.

Establishing a trigger level to jumpstart mitigation earlier and in more communities.

Ensuring the completion of more numerous and more thorough lead service line replacements.

For the first time, requiring testing in schools and childcare facilities.



Requiring water systems to identify and make public the locations of lead service lines

Our professional opinion on this bill and the reason we support it is very simple. The fiscal impact to school districts in creating and implementing a testing program is small. The goal would be to identify that our Texas school's water sources are safe. Conversely, if they were to determine that lead levels were not below acceptable levels, the goal would then be to remediate those school water systems to eliminate the lead source. HB 605 addresses both of these priorities.

We also agree with the fact that there is no need to test, if the ultimate goal is not to remedy the causation at the source.

In recent years, the state of Massachusetts reported over 3500 schools with test results over the "action level" from 2016 to 2019. More than 700 of those excessive lead testing results were found in drinking water supplies. During this same time period, Lynn public school district, the 5th largest school district in Massachusetts, had the highest number of tests above the 15 parts per billion action limit of all the state's schools - with 188 tests reporting at a high level. Yet the Massachusetts state database lists "no remediation action reported" for most of those tests. We cannot allow this mistake to happen to our schools – to our children in Texas.

This inaction comes even after a 2012 study by Jessica Reyes of Amherst College showed Massachusetts towns where children who had higher lead levels in their blood tended to have lower scores on the standardized MCAS test, the equivalent to the STARR testing students in Texas take, and in the schools where students saw decreases in lead exposures in the 1990s, saw increases in scores in the 2000s.

We can do better than the State of Massachusetts!

We-----are the State of Texas!

In closing, this bill that protects children at the nearly 8,200 schools that have not adopted a healthy and safe school water plan is an absolute necessity.

Isn't that one of the main reasons we are all here?

To serve and protect not only adult citizens but ESPECIALLY our children.

I support this bill, the Texas Mold Assessors and Remediators Association supports this bill

and we sincerely hope that all of you here today will support this bill because it will help ensure the health and wellbeing of our children who are so vital to the future of our Great State of Texas.

Thank you very much for your time.

References:

1. EPA Report on Ground and Drinking Water - <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit>
2. WGBH Massachusetts Article – 2019 <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2019/11/26/mass-schools-not-required-to-test-water-for->



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3. [https://www.texastribune.org/2021/01/28/texas-lead-drinking-water-schools/#:~:text=Texas%20prepares%20to%20test%20for,water%20for%20the%20first%20time&text=Texas%20will%20soon%20begin%20a,on%20lead%20and%20copper%20exposure](https://www.texastribune.org/2021/01/28/texas-lead-drinking-water-schools/#:~:text=Texas%20prepares%20to%20test%20for,water%20for%20the%20first%20time&text=Texas%20wi
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