

December 4, 2018

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Increased funding for the Lead Service Line Replacement Program in the SFY 2019-2020 Budget

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We write to urge that you build upon the success of the Lead Service Line Replacement Program (LSLRP) by increasing funding to \$100 million in your SFY 2019-2020 budget proposal. The threat of lead in drinking water is not limited to Flint, Michigan – lead pipes are contaminating tap water across New York. Your leadership will be critical to get these dangerous pipes out of the ground.

The LSLRP, created with an initial \$20 million in funding through the Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017, is a model for the nation. It is structured to prevent costs from falling upon homeowners and to ensure statewide accessibility. Municipalities already have replacement crews on the streets thanks to funding from the LSLRP.

While the initial investment in the LSLRP has been a positive first step, with an estimated 360,000 lead service lines across New York in need of replacement, the program must be scaled up to meet the needs of New York municipalities. Given that the total cost of replacing New York's known lead services lines reaches at least \$1 billion, a \$100 million investment would substantially reduce the number of lead service lines in our state.

Scientists have long stated that **there is no safe level of lead exposure**. Even miniscule amounts of lead can cause serious and often irreversible health effects in vulnerable populations, especially children and pregnant women. Learning disabilities, impaired speech and hearing, and diminished IQ are all associated with low levels of lead exposure.

Lead service lines are the greatest contributor to lead in residential drinking water. The best way to reduce lead in our tap water is to remove lead service lines altogether. Until then, public health remains at risk. Corrosion can cause lead to leach into water, a process triggered by stagnant water in the pipes or slight changes in water temperature, chemistry, or flow rate.

Many community water systems are already discovering elevated levels of lead in their drinking water – according to data compiled by the Natural Resources Defense Council, sixty-seven community water systems in New York, serving a total of 126,683 residents, were in violation of EPA's standard for lead in

drinking water between 2015 and 2018. As our infrastructure continues to age, this figure is highly likely to rise – it is critical that this is prevented.

Increasing investment in the LSLRP will not only protect public health, but will also serve as an engine of local economic growth, with the potential to create thousands of union jobs with family-supporting wages. Clean drinking water is also essential to attracting and retaining both residents and businesses.

Facing a federal government with little interest in protecting families from lead exposure, New York must step up to replace lead service lines. We cannot wait for children to get sick before we commit to replacing these dangerous pipes. As the water crisis in Flint, MI so tragically demonstrated, as long as lead pipes remain beneath homes, lead poisoning is a constant threat. Michigan and California have already committed to eliminating lead service lines in their states – New York now needs to show similarly bold leadership.

We look forward to partnering with you to secure an increased investment of \$100 million for the Lead Service Line Replacement Program, putting our state on the path to ensuring clean and safe drinking water for all New Yorkers. Thank you for your commitment to this issue and consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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CC: Carl Heastie, Speaker, New York State Assembly
Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Incoming Majority Leader, New York State Senate