

Environmental

Advocates

NY

EANY SUPPORTS Getting the Lead Out of Schools



[A.160-B \(Gottfried, et al.\)](#)

[S.2122-A \(Rivera, et al.\)](#)

Explanation:

This legislation strengthens testing requirements for lead in school drinking water. With young children at the highest risk of life-long damage from this neurotoxin, New York must take steps to ensure its schools are lead-free.

There is no safe level of lead in drinking water. The growing bodies and developing organs of children are especially vulnerable to lead exposure. Even low levels of lead in children can cause neurological damaging impaired hearing, slowed growth, and anemia.

This legislation builds on New York's nation-leading efforts to reduce lead in drinking water. In 2016, the Legislature required public schools to test their tap water for lead and take action if elevated levels were discovered. A 2018 analysis of the statewide testing data revealed the shocking prevalence of lead in drinking water: around 82 percent of school buildings reported one or more taps that tested above the state lead action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb).

This bill reduces the lead action level from 15 ppb to 5ppb, which will ensure that more water taps contaminated with lead are remediated. This is an important improvement given that more than 63,000 school drinking water outlets, or over 17 percent of the outlets test in 2016, tested between 5 ppb-14.9 ppb, according to an [analysis](#) by the New York League of Conservation Voters. Illinois has set a school lead action level of 5 ppb, and Vermont's action level is 4 ppb.

This bill will also make other improvements to New York's school testing program such as increasing testing frequency to once every three years and eliminating exemptions from testing.

Summary:

This bill amends section 1110 of the Public Health Law to expand potable water testing in schools.