February 14, 2023

To: Mayor Patrick Madden and the Troy City Council

Re: Protect Kids in Troy from Lead Poisoning Now

Dear Mayor Madden and Troy City Council members,

We are writing to you about Troy’s lead poisoning crisis. We are Troy residents, mothers and fathers, supportive local organizations, and many others who care deeply about the health and safety of our families, neighbors, and the over 1,000 lead-poisoned children in the city.

Troy has a lead in drinking water problem. We are demanding that you take more aggressive action to ensure that every person in Troy has clean, lead-free water and to put the city on a path to 100% lead pipe replacement. We urge you to commit to the following Get the Lead Out Platform:

1. Present a plan to swiftly spend current lead pipe replacement grant funding. In line with these Principles of Lead Pipe Replacement, do not place any costs on homeowners or tenants. Prioritize replacements for families with lead-poisoned or young children and in low-income neighborhoods;
2. Establish a local revenue stream for lead pipe replacement, in addition to using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and commit to a timetable for removing all of these dangerous pipes. Use the City of Albany as a model, which intends to replace all lead pipes in 10 years and has set aside money specifically to do so;
3. Provide free water filters to every home with a lead pipe as those residents wait for a replacement, so they are protected from lead exposure when they turn on the tap;
4. Make public all communications about the current lead pipe replacement grant funding between city staff and other city, county, and state officials;
5. Investigate whether Troy is fully complying with actions required by the US EPA following the city’s exceedance of the action level for lead in drinking water;
6. Release a list of state and federal funding that the city intends to apply for or has already applied for to accelerate lead pipe replacement;
7. Pass a resolution urging Governor Hochul and the State Legislature to appropriate and allocate more state funding for lead pipe replacement;
8. Do NOT establish a task force on lead poisoning. Task forces slow progress and sap energy from the real work needed to eliminate this threat to public health. Instead, identify a point-person and team who will work on this issue full-time; and
9. Create and regularly update a website to track progress with handing out filters, replacing lead pipes, applying for new funds, and more. List the full-time point-person and team for residents with questions.

At the Troy City Council meeting on February 2, we raised the alarm that the city has for 5 years failed to spend a $516,000 grant from the NYS Department of Health (DOH) to replace lead pipes. We also described how Mayor Madden and Superintendent of Public Utilities Wheland had ignored at least one resident who had pleaded for help to remove her lead pipe and safeguard the health of her young children. Council President Mantello had also proved unresponsive to a recent email from this resident.

But after listening to heartbreaking stories about residents’ exposure to dangerous levels of lead in drinking water and experience raising lead-poisoned children, Mayor Madden made statements at the end of the meeting downplaying the urgency of problem and dismissing residents asking important questions
about why the city had not acted years ago to protect people from lead hazards. The Mayor’s comments were outrageous.

In the week since that Council meeting, the Mayor and Superintendent have continued to make unacceptable comments. They have tried to deflect blame for the city’s failures by faulting homeowners for not identifying lead pipes themselves, and they have implied that replacing no lead pipes is better than beginning to replace some lead pipes.

The truth is that there is no good reason why the city should not have spent 100% of its lead pipe replacement funding by now, as other grant recipients like Albany and Schenectady had done years ago. It is time for Mayor Madden and his administration to accept responsibility for that and shift their full attention to getting the lead out of Troy’s drinking water.

On February 8, the Times Union reported that council leaders are supportive of tapping into Troy’s remaining $4 million of ARPA funds to boost funding available for lead pipe replacements. While this would be an important and welcome step, it would still only make a dent in the need to replace Troy’s estimated 14,000 lead pipes, with an estimated price tag of $70 million.

The Get the Lead Out Platform that we listed above is needed in addition to the use of ARPA money. Nothing less than a comprehensive strategy to eliminate the lead in Troy’s drinking water will be adequate to protect people’s health from this deadly neurotoxin. We hope to hear updates on each of our platform requests at the Utility Committee meeting this Thursday. The voices of Troy residents should no longer be ignored on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Supportive Organizations (in alphabetical order):

Alexis Goldsmith
Beyond Plastics

Rebecca Garrard
Citizen Action

Bobbi Wilding
Clean+Healthy

Chris Lake
Community for a Cause

Marketa Edwards
The Community Rising Project

Liz Moran
Earthjustice

Rob Hayes
Environmental Advocates NY

Sarah Bachinger
Friends of the Mahicantuck

Dierdre Shea
Fun Stuff Design

Bob Blackmon, Linda OMalley, Daquetta Jones, Robert Martiniano, Noreen McKee, and David Bissember
Justice Center of Rensselaer County

Rev. West McNeill
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS

Kathleen A Curtis
Moms for a Nontoxic New York

Xavier Coughlin, MD and Jane Luceno
People’s Health Sanctuary

Shanice Fleming
Queenz Cut Flower Farm
Adrian Alicea Roman  
*RPI RA Union*

Aileen Javier  
*The Sanctuary for Independent Media*

Greg Campbell-Cohen  
*TIMBER*

Sean Collins  
*Troy Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO*

Renee Rhodes  
*Troy Democratic Socialists of America*

Renee Powell  
*NAACP Troy Branch #2182*

Hon. Gabriella A. Romero  
*Albany Common Councilmember, 6th Ward*

Supportive Troy Residents (including parents and business owners, in alphabetical order):

Emily Abramson  
Jay Alcumbrac  
Rhiannon Antico  
Jeffrey Arias  
Deyva Arthur  
Kelly Artis  
David Banks  
Aidan Bardos  
Carolyn Bardos  
Christopher Bassett  
Jenn Baumstein  
Katherine Bell  
Luz Marquez Benbow  
Jessica Bennett  
William Bornstein  
Annee Borthwick  
Melissa Bromley  
Emily Brown  
Simon Burke-Lipiczky  
Crystal Burnham  
Stephanie Caragliano  
Jennifer Cardinal  
Laura M Cardwell  
Rachel Carter  
Christopher Caulfield  
Justin Cirigliano  
Jess Cloutier  
Dr. Brandon Costelloe-Kuehn  
Nailah Coley  
Colie Collen  
Alanna Costelloe-Kuehn  
Emily Coopet  
Shannon Curran-Trzepacz  
Victor Davidson  
Holley Davis  
Skye Day  
Diane Deas  
Sophia DeVito  
Sanjana Dhulipalla  
Kristoph DiMaria  
Noelle Dommasch  
Rhea Drysdale  
Sasha Dubodel  
Emily Eller  
Emily Ellis  
Jona Favreau  
Colette Fishkin  
Meghan Fitzgerald  
Lila Flanagan  
Wayne Foy  
Lori Friday  
Kourtney Gallagher  
Michael Gardner  
Rosaly German  
Myron Getman  
Taylor Gillis  
Lisa Graham  
Daniel Graham  
Nicole Gramenides  
Amanda Gray  
Christian Grigoraskos  
Zachary Guthrie  
Alexander Hanse  
Sina Basila Hickey  
Sonya Hovsepian  
Ellie Irons  
Azura Iversen-Keahi  
Aileen Javier  
Julia Kelly  
Danny Killion  
Dr. Abby Kinchy  
Nancy Klepsch
Celia Kutz
Arslan Lau
Isabella Legovich
Erin Lennox
Jack Letourneau
Lily Lothrop
Mark Looney
Andrew Lynn
Maricate Mangan
Jess Maxwell
Nora McDowell
Desirea McKee
Sylva Menard
Quinn Miller
DaVania Mitchell
Loretta Montgomery, PE
Graciela Monroy
Daniel Morrissey
Adam Morrow
Gwen Moyer
Michele Murray
Abigail Murray
Avi Nagel
Caroline Nagy
Lyd Nenno
Samantha Neumann
Kamilia Nicolas
Bug Nichols
Anthony Olivares
Alissa Ouderkirk
Emily Pallas
Sarah Parks
Ashley Parsley
Katherine Parsley
Lawrence J Parsley Jr, MD
Sara Paupini
Adam Pelletier
Ariela Perez-Wallach
Terra Pfund

Kelsey Poore
Anita Prabhakar
Elizabeth Press
H. David Previtali
Hannah L Price
Kevin Quinde
James Dylan Rees
Hannah Riegel
Renee Rhodes
Victoria Robert
Laura Ryder
Ashley Saupp
Elizabeth Schatz
Eloise Schieferdecker
Nicholas Schrader
Jennifer Schulaner
Nina Schwartzman
Christopher Scully
Dara Silbermann
Abigail Simkovic
Cameron Smith
Emma Soto
Gia Sprouse
Monica J Staats
Beth Steckley
Sophia Turnbow
Eleanor Tyner
Audrey Vallee
Rafael Varela
Aaron J. Vera, P.E.
Emily A. Wager
Lorelei Wagner
Ian A Walkinshaw
Ashley Whitaker
Amanda Wild
Aliana Wilson
Yi Zhou

Supportive Former Troy Residents and NYS Residents (in alphabetical order):

Jennifer Becker
Stephanie Collins
Angela Cortina
K Michelle Doyle
Kayla Hartman

Line Kristine Henriksen
Jessica Hoffman
Laura Rabinow
Mark Russo
Pam Sweig