

Good evening. My name is Talor Musil, Health Policy Coordinator at Women for a Healthy Environment, an environmental health nonprofit focused on exposures that impact public health.

I am speaking today in regards to the recently awarded PennVest grant for lead service line replacements in the Wilkinsburg Penn Joint service area. I would like to congratulate the board, staff and ratepayers who worked hard to secure the more than 9 million dollars that will make possible the replacement of approximately 1,000 lead service lines. Thank you for demonstrating regional leadership on this issue and for your commitment to conduct full lead service line replacements. As we know, partial lead service line replacements result in short-term, and in some cases long-term, elevations in lead levels.

I also want to highlight a recent Women for a Healthy Environment report that I believe was discussed in April's board meeting, titled "Something's in the Water." This countywide analysis assessed community water systems' drinking water quality, lead poisoning prevention strategies, and public transparency. One of the key findings was that 80 percent of the 36 water systems in Allegheny County had detectable levels of lead in their 2019 CCR reports. Because there is no safe level of lead, and lead poisoning causes irreversible damage to the brain, bones, kidneys (among many other organs and body systems), this finding gives us reason for serious concern. Additionally, with the anticipated revisions to the Federal Lead and Copper Rule that will likely result in lower, more health-protective standards, reducing lead in drinking water levels is that much more pertinent.

Conducting a successful 9 million dollar comprehensive public health focused lead service line replacement program will require partnerships and consultation with various sectors. Without these partnerships, we are concerned that the funds may not be utilized in the most effective and equitable way possible. Partners we highly recommend include:

- Public health experts such as the Health Department to help identify and prioritize areas of greatest risk of lead exposure and highest rates of elevated blood lead levels;
- Academic institutions to help inventory lead service lines as accurately as possible with prediction mapping tools, and;
- Community organizations who can assist with the development and/or dissemination of community notifications and educational materials to make sure they are clear and boost the participation of residents.

We look forward to working together to improve the quality of Wilkinsburg Penn Joint drinking water as well as protect the health of consumers, particularly of children who are the most vulnerable to lead's detrimental effects. We hope we can be a resource to the Authority and can assist in building the partnerships necessary to implement a model program. In the coming weeks, we would love to schedule a round table discussion with other PennVest grantees in Allegheny County (such as West View Water Authority) and successful replacement programs from across the country to discuss how the new grantees could apply best practices and lessons learned from their experiences.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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