

Wilkesburg Penn-Joint Water Authority
Board Meeting
June 22, 2021
Public Comment

Good evening. My name is Talor Musil, Health Policy Coordinator at Women for a Healthy Environment, an environmental health nonprofit focused on exposures in homes, schools and early learning centers. Our organization is also a member of the Our Water Campaign.

I would like to thank Representative Summer Lee, Representative Ed Gainey, and Senator Jay Costa for expressing their congratulations for the recently awarded PennVest funds for lead service line removal as well as their support for a Community Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of this project. Women for a Healthy Environment joins them in this, and equally urges the water authority to partner with community groups, environmental organizations, outside legal experts, academic institutions, public health and epidemiological experts, engineering specialists and union representatives to ensure lead service lines are equitably, promptly, and accurately identified and replaced in full in the areas with the greatest need.

Of the 22 communities serviced by Wilkesburg Penn Joint, 6 of them - Wilmerding, North Braddock, Braddock, Turtle Creek, Wilkesburg, and Pitcairn - are in the top ten percent (or top 12) municipalities impacted by childhood lead poisoning in Allegheny County.

According to the 2019 Allegheny County Environmental Justice Report and PA DEP, these communities are defined as environmental justice areas. These areas disproportionately carry the burden of exposure to environmental toxins as well as the negative health impacts caused by these exposures. Lead poisoning through contaminated drinking water is among these exposures. Removing lead service lines on both the public and private side every time line replacement occurs, separate from or as part of the PennVest project, in these priority areas is key to preventing further lead in water exposure in your service area.

We are eager to have a discussion with Executive Director Nick Bianchi and any interested staff and board members about putting together a Community Advisory Committee that will ensure the PennVest lead service line removal project is as impactful as it can be, and can hopefully serve as a model for other authorities to follow. We will be in touch in the coming days about scheduling this meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Talor Musil
Health Policy Coordinator
Women for a Healthy Environment

