

**Citizens' Committee for Children of New York * Clean + Healthy * Earthjustice
Environmental Advocates NY * Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc.
Healthy Schools Network * NRDC * NYLCV
NYS District II of the American Academy of Pediatrics * NYS PTA
New York Sustainable Business Council * Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

March 5, 2024

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate
Room 330 Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Speaker Carl E. Heastie
NYS Assembly
LOB Room 932
Albany, NY 1224

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

We the undersigned are writing out of concern over how the Executive's 50% cut, from \$500 million to \$250 million in funding for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act will harm the state's commitment to fully reimburse school districts for drinking water remediation for lead contamination as enacted in the 2021 Safe School Drinking Water Act amendments.¹ To address this, as well as many other well-documented needs for continued state assistance to fund clean water projects, we support \$600 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, restoring the \$250 million cut and adding an additional \$100 million for this popular and effective program.

As you know, lead is a poisonous heavy metal that causes significant adverse health effects, particularly in children. It is so poisonous that experts agree that there is no safe level of lead exposure. Drinking water is one pathway of exposure to lead. Children spend much of their time in school facilities, receiving most of their water intake from school fountains and sinks. This makes any level of lead in school drinking water of particular concern.

New York State led the nation when it passed the 2016 Safe School Drinking Water Act becoming the first state in the nation to complete mandated testing of drinking water across the state test for lead contamination. The 2021 amendments to this historic law reestablished the state's national leadership and commitment to public health in its school communities by lowering the action level to 5 ppb (down from 15 ppb) and increasing the testing periods to triennially (down from every 5 years).

¹ Chapter 771 of the Laws of 2021 amended Public Health Law (PHL) §1110, effective December 22, 2022 adding the following language: "Expenses for remediation under this section and any regulations promulgated thereto shall be fully reimbursable from funds appropriated through the department of environmental conservation for clean water infrastructure projects."

The current 2023-2025 testing period, with these health protective standards, is underway and school district reimbursement requests are soon to follow. At a time when new programs such as this one are coming online, now is the time to grow and not cut the Clean Water Infrastructure Act.

We hope that in the coming weeks as the legislature finalizes its respective one-house budgets that it will stand with its educational, environmental justice, and public health constituencies by including \$600 in funding for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act.

Sincerely,

Joshua Klainberg, Senior Vice President
NYLCV

Kyle Belokopitsky, Executive Director
NYS PTA

Joan Leary Matthews, Senior Attorney
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Caitlin Ferrante, Conservation Program Manager
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WE ACT for Environmental Justice

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CC:

Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chair
Health Committee

Assemblymember Amy Paulin, Chair
Health Committee

Senator Shelley Mayer, Chair
Education Committee

Assemblymember Michal Benedetto, Chair
Education Committee

Senator Peter Harckham, Chair
Environmental Conservation

Assemblymember Deborah Glick, Chair
Environmental Conservation Committee