

Alderman Robert Donovan
Alderman Mark Borkowski
Alderman José Perez
Alderman Terry Witkowski
Alderman Cavalier Johnson

CC: Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton; Alderman Tony Zielinski

RE: Support for resolution 170131, relating to Health Department recommendations for avoiding lead exposure

July 19, 2017

Dear Members of the Public Safety and Health Committee,

On behalf of our members in the City of Milwaukee, and on behalf of the tens of thousands of Milwaukeeans currently at risk of consuming lead-contaminated water delivered through lead infrastructure in homes, schools, daycares, businesses and elsewhere, we respectfully urge you to vote in favor of Resolution 170131 SUB A. We believe the resolution takes meaningful steps to help protect Milwaukee residents from childhood lead exposure through drinking water. However, we also strongly encourage the City to implement proactive policies that go beyond those the resolution prescribes.

Resolution 170131 SUB A will help protect families most clearly at risk: Those who live in homes with lead service lines (LSLs). As numerous studies and test results from around the country have shown, however, we must not underestimate the risk of lead contamination even in homes without LSLs. **As the resolution notes, LSLs are not the only source of water lead contamination; fixtures, solder or other parts containing lead may be found in homes and buildings even where LSLs are not present.** Consider that the Madison Metropolitan School District detected elevated water lead levels at several schools in the capital region during a recent round of testing, despite the fact that Madison removed all LSLs in the city over the course of the early- to mid-2000s.

We therefore strongly encourage the City to implement additional, proactive policies to prevent children and pregnant women in Milwaukee from ingesting water that could be laced with lead. In particular, the City should make drinking water filters widely available to all residents, even if they do not live in homes with LSLs. Furthermore, we urge the City to continue working with state

and federal officials to find the financial resources necessary to quickly and completely remove all lead infrastructure from Milwaukee's public and private water infrastructure.

Finally, we encourage you to continue paying particular attention to schools, pre-schools and daycares, the places where our children go each day to learn and play. As outlined in our February 2017 *Get the Lead Out* report (available for download at <http://wispirgfoundation.org/reports/wip/get-lead-out>), which surveyed the health threat of lead in schools' water, additional proactive policies that will protect children's health include:

- Helping residents, schools and daycares install and maintain filters certified to remove lead on taps and fountains used for cooking and drinking.
- Adopting a 1 part per billion (ppb) standard for lead in drinking water, consistent with recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Requiring testing at all water outlets used for drinking or cooking at all schools and daycares annually, using protocols designed to capture worst-case lead exposure for children.
- Immediately removing from service any faucet or fountain used for drinking or cooking where testing indicates lead in the water.
- Disclosing all available information about lead in water infrastructure, test results, and remediation plans/progress both onsite and online.
- Providing funding to remove lead in schools' and daycares' water infrastructure.

The detrimental public health impacts of lead exposure, including through drinking water, are well-documented. As you know, lead irreversibly impairs how children learn, grow, and behave. It is also clear that lead pipes and other lead infrastructure are widespread throughout Milwaukee's water system, elevating the risk of contamination.

Given the scope and seriousness of the threat, committed action is required at every level of government to keep our kids safe from lead exposure. Please support this important resolution that would help protect public health from the considerable adverse impacts of lead in drinking water.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Skopec', with a horizontal line underneath.

Peter Skopec

Director, Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group (WISPIRG)

WISPIRG, the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group, is a non-profit, non-partisan public interest advocacy organization that takes on powerful interests on behalf of its members, working to win concrete results for good government, public health and Wisconsin consumers.