



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Carl L. Marcellino

Senator Marcellino: Require Lead Testing in Schools

CARL L. MARCELLINO June 7, 2016

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Amid growing reports of lead in school drinking water systems across the state, a bipartisan coalition of State Senators and Assemblymembers -- joined by New York public health, environment, and healthy schools advocacy groups -- today called for the enactment of legislation before the end of the current legislative session that will attempt to bring this crisis under control.

Lead is a major health hazard, especially for young children. It has been found in drinking water in schools across Long Island and the State.

Senator Carl L. Marcellino, Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, said, "We have a responsibility to protect the safety of the students and staff in every school in New York State. No child or school employee should ever be put in jeopardy by tainted water in their school. Testing for lead in drinking water will ensure we jump start the process of identifying and eliminating such a serious health crisis,"

Senator Tom O'Mara, Chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, said, "There's no more important place to start this overall and ongoing effort to better address lead contamination than within our schools to protect children. The increasing incidents of lead contamination in school water systems demand that we take short- and long-term actions to strengthen testing, reporting and remediation requirements."

In New York, public school Building Condition Surveys are conducted once every five years. They require some identification of possible hazards – such as lead pipes used to deliver water to school buildings -- but the state lacks a comprehensive plan for testing all drinking water at the tap and addressing contaminants. It even lacks a way to make the results of current tests readily available to the community.

The federal government banned most uses of lead-based paint in 1977. In 1986, it banned lead pipe and solder in plumbing that carried potable water. And most lead in gasoline was phased out in the 1980s. These measures led to a decline in the national rates of lead poisoning, but stubbornly high rates of lead poisoning still persist in our urban areas and in communities with high concentrations of children-of-color and/or low wealth.

Unfortunately, the government never actually dealt with the 3 million tons of old lead that line the walls and piping fixtures of millions of housing units and thousands of schools.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta said, "We must do everything we can to ensure our children are safe — especially when they are at school. While it is unfortunate

legislation such as this is necessary today, it is also commonsense. We encourage the New York State Legislature to pass this bill before it adjourns for the year."

Bonnie Russell, President, New York State PTA said, "The New York State PTA supports this legislation and urges passage as a way to protect our children when they are in school. New York State should be doing everything it can to make sure our schools are healthy, and that school environments do not make children sick or harm their abilities to learn."