

Duckworth, Booker reintroduce bill to protect children from lead-contaminated water

June 21 2017 4:30 PM



WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (--D-IL) today reintroduced her *Get the Lead Out of Schools Act of 2017* with U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) to help ensure drinking water in schools across our nation is clean and safe from lead. The legislation would ensure periodic testing for lead contamination in schools, while also providing schools with additional resources to monitor lead levels and replace outdated water infrastructure systems.

“When families send their children to school, they should not have to worry about the school’s drinking water being contaminated with a dangerous neurotoxin like lead.” Duckworth said. **“The threat of contaminated water is a national public health crisis in cities across the nation, including Chicago, Carbondale, Galesburg and East St. Louis, Illinois. The *Get the Lead Out of Schools Act* will help protect our children, but I will keep working to ensure every family in America – no matter where they live – has access to clean and safe drinking water.”**

Illinois is one of a few states that already has systems in place to regularly test lead levels in drinking water. This legislation would offer the state new funding opportunities to support testing efforts.

“Our failure to adequately invest in our nation’s crumbling water infrastructure is threatening the health and safety of kids across the country in thousands of communities, from Flint, Michigan, to Newark, New Jersey, to far beyond,” said Senator Booker. **“Our children deserve better than continued inaction, and this bill will take an important step in upgrading our water infrastructure and strengthening testing requirements, putting the health of our children first while creating jobs and investing in our future.”**

An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study published in 2013 found that nearly 80% of homes in Chicago are connected to lead service lines, as well as the presence of elevated levels of lead in the drinking water of half of the Chicago homes tested. Most communities lack the resources to investigate their water system’s exposure to lead and remain at risk. In 2016, The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system completed lead testing in 327 schools built prior to 1986 and found that 113 different schools contained fixtures such as sinks or water fountains with higher levels above EPA’s actionable levels of 15 ppb.

“Where we can prevent children’s exposure to lead, we need to intervene. The *Get the Lead Out Act* calls for testing, disclosure and remediation to identify problems

in schools, update water infrastructure, and provide resources for ongoing monitoring and maintenance,"said Clean Water Action President Robert Wendelgass.

“School superintendents are committed to ensuring the safety of the water in their districts and many are already addressing lead-related issues in their schools. We applaud Senators Duckworth and Booker for their commitment to the health of students and school infrastructure through the Get the Lead out of Schools Act. Given the news coming out of Flint (MI), Newark (NJ), and other communities across the country, this bill is a crucial step in protecting children from harmful contaminants and in improving school infrastructure and safety,” said Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators Daniel Domenech.