

March 26, 2010

**Testimony to the District of Columbia City Council  
In Support of the  
Healthy Schools Act of 2009**

**District of Columbia**  
1010 Vermont Avenue NW  
Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20005  
Tel: 202.895.0420  
Fax: 202.895.0438

[www.cleanwateraction.org/dc](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/dc)

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Andrew Fellows, and I am the Chesapeake Regional Director for Clean Water Action, a national organization with thousands of members that are residents of the District of Columbia. The Healthy Schools Act is a bill that we support, and I am here to underscore some of the water-related recommendations of a group of environmental health advocates who met on February 4<sup>th</sup> to develop ideas to strengthen provisions regarding environmental health in schools. In general, the group was impressed by the level of specificity and detail given to nutrition, physical activity and green building. The group already submitted its full recommendations to your staff, and I wish today to emphasize what we can do to address the dangers of lead in water of the District's schools.

***Lead-contaminated drinking water***

Recent DCPS policies for testing drinking water for lead contamination and the use of water filters on taps where high lead levels are documented appear to be effectively reducing lead levels in water. But without periodic retesting, regular maintenance and on-schedule changing of filters, water lead concentrations could well return to unsafe levels. Also, use of proper sampling and analysis protocols is critical for measuring true water concentrations to which school occupants will be exposed.

DCPS recently agreed to a long-standing request by the lead poisoning prevention advocates to use a proper sampling method for testing lead in water, the system had previously used improper water testing methods. Without a requirement to use proper methodology, DCPS could potentially neglect this issue again in the future. Legislation should specify both the periodicity of water testing and the sampling and analytic techniques that should be used.

EPA's "3Ts [training, testing, telling] for Reducing Lead in School Drinking Water" could be used as a starting point. However, we urge the incorporation of additional provisions such as:

1. Regular testing of all schools: as with lead-based paint hazards, lead-in-water hazards must be assessed periodically too. We propose that comprehensive lead-in-water testing of all taps used for drinking or cooking (i.e., fountains, coolers, bathroom taps, kitchen taps) be conducted at every school every 3rd year. Schools can be on a rotating schedule so that each year one-third of the schools are tested.
2. We propose the use of the standard EPA protocol for testing in schools. However, we also propose the following: no pre-flushing the night before sampling, no flushing immediately before sampling, no removal or cleaning of aerators any time before sampling (but this should be encouraged immediately after sampling), use of "normal" water flow, collection of a second-draw sample after 30 seconds of flushing following a first-draw sample.
3. We propose requiring the use of an analytical protocol with 2% strong acid preservative that allows for the detection of lead particles (rather just soluble lead)

Additionally, we urge that the bill includes language requiring online, real-time data transparency for each school. Specifically, DCPS families and the public ought to have easy access to:

- The dates that each school was (or will be) tested
- The sampling and analytical protocols used for each sampling round
- Complete test results by school and tap
- Complete records of remediation measures

A summary of the EPA's 3Ts is available at  
<http://www.epa.gov/OGWDW/schools/guidance.html#3ts>.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**Andrew Fellows, Chesapeake Regional Director, 202-895-0420, x102**  
**[afellows@cleanwater.org](mailto:afellows@cleanwater.org)**