TO: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
   Members, House Environment and Transportation Committee
   The Honorable Jared Solomon

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
       J. Steven Wise
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DATE: March 6, 2020

(Safe School Drinking Water Act)

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of
Pediatrics, we submit this letter of support House Bill 1475.

The provisions of House Bill 1475 propose to strengthen the testing thresholds and requirements for
school drinking water outlets that were enacted through legislation passed in 2019. The bill amends the current
threshold for a determination of an elevated lead level in a drinking water outlet for the Environmental Protection
Agency (EPA) recommended standard that is not defined to a specific standard of 5 parts per billion.

It is well recognized that no safe blood lead level in children has ever been identified. Children can be
exposed to lead from a number of sources, including tap water. Lead exposure from tap water comes from the
decay of plumbing or the solder that connects pipes, and the risk is higher in older buildings. Water that remains
in pipes overnight or when schools are not in session stays in contact with lead pipes or lead solder and could
contain higher levels of lead. As such, it is important to identify elevated levels of lead in drinking water in
schools in order to reduce or prevent a child’s exposure to lead.

High levels of lead in tap water can cause health effects if the lead in the water enters the blood. A high
blood lead level can cause damage to the brain and kidneys and can interfere with the production of red blood
cells that carry oxygen to all parts of the body. Children under the age of six are especially vulnerable to lead
poisoning, which can affect their health and development, such as impaired mental and physical development as
well as hearing problems. Specifying a specific threshold for defining an elevated blood level provides clear
direction to the schools with respect to their responsibilities to address the elevated level and protect the children
they serve. It also enhances the safety and well-being of our children from the negative health impacts associated
with lead exposure. A favorable report is requested.

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