To: Preventive Health Policy Division, Chair Rep. Mike Freiberg
From: Steve Schultz, Water Program Coordinator, Clean Water Action
Date: January 31, 2022
Re: Written Testimony Supporting HF 2650 (Jordan)*; Residential lead service line replacement grant program established, and money appropriated.

Help ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water for everyone in Minnesota by replacing all residential Lead Service Lines. Clean Water Action supports HF 2650. No one should be priced out of safe drinking water.

Why is Lead Bad for Our Health?

Lead is a highly poisonous metal and can affect almost every organ in the body and the nervous system. It is a naturally occurring element found, due to human activity, in all parts of our environment. People can be exposed to lead through inhalation, ingestion and to a lesser extent, dermal contact. Because they absorb more lead than adults and because their brains and nervous systems are still developing, children under 6 and the developing fetus are most susceptible to lead exposure. The most common source of lead exposure is ingestion of old lead paint. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that lead in drinking water can be 20% or more of a person's lead exposure.

How Does Lead Get into Our Water?

Lead, unlike many other drinking water contaminants, is usually not present in the drinking water source, but rather results from the distribution system or on site plumbing itself. When old lead pipes age, lead particles break off the inside of the pipe or when "corrosive" water comes into contact with lead in pipes, fixtures, and solder, lead will travel with the water, out of the tap, and into our bodies. There is no safe amount of lead in drinking water. Lead accumulates in the body over time (in bones and teeth), even small amounts can create serious health impacts.

What are Lead Service Lines (LSLs) and Why Are They a Problem?

LSLs are the pipe that connects the public water supply main pipe to your home to provide water service. The Minnesota Department of Health estimates there are at least 100,000 LSLs in Minnesota. EPA estimates that if LSLs are present, they are the largest source of lead in a home.

Who Might Have LSLs in Their Home?

Exposure to lead from drinking water is less common than other pathways yet, as demonstrated in Flint, MI, can have serious consequences. Older homes, especially those built before 1986, are more likely to have lead service lines, fixtures and solder. It's important to note that even newer "lead-free" fixtures could contain up to eight percent lead until 2013. The risk of lead poisoning falls disproportionately on Black children who are nearly three times more likely than white children to have elevated blood-lead levels. Some of the health impacts include attention difficulties, behavior changes, lowered IQ, and overall slowed development which can lead to lifelong inequities.

Support for HF2650

Currently, property owners are expected to pay to replace half of the line if their community has a plan to remove LSLs. This leaves behind many Minnesotans. **No one should be priced out of safe drinking water.**

HF2650 will cover all the cost for Minnesotans to remove an LSL if they have one leading into their home. The bill will fund an inventory so cities know which homes have LSLs. It sets a goal, and provides the money, to replace all LSLs in 10 years. If passed, it will also prioritize neighborhoods that have lower incomes and ensure that communities that bear the most of the harm from LSLs will move to the top of the list.

We need to get the lead out of our drinking water in Minnesota. Lead in drinking water is a serious problem affecting millions of people across the United States and thousands in Minnesota. Pass HF2650 to fund removal of all lead service lines in Minnesota. It has taken far too long to address this problem. The time is now to ensure that none of our neighbors will be subject to lead poisoning from their tap water and no one suffer the potential lifetime of health problems that could result.

Clean Water Action supports HF 2556 (Morrison)*; Nontoxic ammunition use required, and money appropriated. Lead should be removed from all products that could pollute our water and environment or affect our health. Lead shot and tackle can contaminate wildlife, which in turn could poison other predatory wildlife, or humans if they consume the animal as food. People who rely on these animals for sustenance could experience more extensive health problems because of this source of lead contamination. Pass HF2556 to eliminate another potential source of lead contamination in our environment and health problems that could result.