



Dr. Joel Davidson, MD
Akron Children's Hospital
Proponent Testimony, Ohio House Bill 226 (HB 226)
Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Dear Chairman Reineke, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee --

My name is Dr. Joel Davidson, and I am a primary care physician at Akron Children's. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Ohio House Bill 226 (HB 226). I would also like to express Akron Children's thanks to State Representative Dontavius Jarrells and State Representative Monica Blasdel for their initiative in working across the aisle on behalf of all Ohioans. Although HB 226 is considered a "utilities bill," its implementation will have positive effects on the health of Ohio citizens – especially children.

If implemented, HB 226 would allow a public water utility that is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to relieve the customer of the large upfront costs, and perform the replacement of, lead water lines. They would then be afforded the ability to recover those costs after the utility's next rate case. Additionally, HB 226 would allow for customers who have replaced lead lines themselves to be reimbursed for the costs of those projects. Regardless of scenario, utility customers will continue to maintain the legal title and the future responsibility for their service line.

Akron Children's Hospital, like all of Ohio's children's hospitals, treat children who suffer the effects of lead exposure. Akron Children's Lead Clinic provides screening, diagnosis and treatment for children who may be suffering from lead poisoning. Our team includes a board-certified pediatrician, clinical nurse coordinator and specialists from clinical pharmacology/toxicology, nutrition, neuropsychology, social work and legal aid.

Lead exposure is a serious public health issue. Long-term exposure to lead, a naturally occurring metal used in everything from construction materials to batteries, can cause serious health problems. Lead is toxic to everyone, but unborn babies and young children are at greatest risk for health problems from lead poisoning. Since lead poisoning symptoms typically don't appear until dangerous amounts have built up in the blood, testing is mandated for all Medicaid patients at 12 and 24 months of age, and the Ohio Department of Health has developed blood lead testing requirements for other children in Ohio under 6 years of age. Symptoms from lead poisoning range from headaches and stomach pain to behavioral problems and anemia (not enough healthy red blood cells). Lead can also affect a child's developing brain.

HB 226 would be another tool that Ohio can use to combat lead exposure in our communities as it focuses directly on the replacement of lead water lines. Any effort to protect our children is a worthy endeavor and is due your utmost consideration. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. HB 226 is a potentially life-saving bill, and Akron Children's Hospital would greatly appreciate your support.