

May 7, 2024

The Honorable Bill Reineke
Chair, Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Ohio Water Partnership's Support of House Bill 226

Dear Chairman Reineke,

On behalf of the Ohio Water Partnership, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 226. The Ohio Water Partnership is a broad-based, diverse coalition of businesses from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses advocating for sound water policy. The organization's mission is to ensure a consistent, effective and equitable approach in protecting and preserving Ohio's natural water resources with a focus on promoting Ohio's competitive advantage in clean, safe, affordable water in all its forms across the state. As we like to say, *Ohio water means business.*

In our efforts to promote safe drinking water in the Buckeye State, we support House Bill 226 because it will enable Ohioans to more easily replace the approximately 650,000 operational water service lines in our state that contain lead. Replacing lead water service lines is a vital component of assuring all Ohioans have access to safe drinking water because these service lines contribute to lead poisonings and other poor health outcomes. According to the most recent CDC data, lead poisoning impacts nearly 10,000 Ohio children under the age of six every year.

House Bill 226 seeks to address these negative effects by permitting water-works companies to replace customer owned lead based water service lines. Under the legislation, water-works companies may now replace the portion of a service line that leads into a customer's home starting at the property line and seek cost recovery for those replacement through the standard rate case process at the Ohio Public Utilities Commission. A water-works company may replace these service lines through a company initiated lead water service line replacement program, an emergency replacement, or a regularly scheduled utility main replacement project. Similarly, a water-works company shall reimburse a customer who replaces a lead service line if the utility confirms the service line contains lead and the customer submits a reimbursement request within 12 months.

Enabling water-works companies to replace customer owned water lines containing lead will eliminate the financial burden that often prevents homeowners from addressing their lead water lines. The legislation also helps promote equitable access to safe drinking water because the remaining lead water service lines are often in rural and economically disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the legislation incentivizes water-works companies to invest in the state's water infrastructure by creating a cost recovery mechanism that holds the company harmless for the cost of replacing customer owned lead service lines.

In closing, the Ohio Water Partnership supports House Bill 226 because its passage will result in more Ohioans having access to safe drinking water, eliminate financial obstacles that often making replacement of lead water lines cost prohibitive, and increase investment into Ohio's water infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Jim Samuel

Jim Samuel, Executive Director
Ohio Water Partnership