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Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and esteemed members of the House Development Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 307, the Lead Line Replacement Act.

I stand before you not just as a State Representative and Assistant Minority Leader, but as a survivor, a survivor of lead poisoning. For me, lead was an invisible enemy that silently invaded my childhood and forever changed the course of my life. I carry the scars of that battle: the sleepless nights, the endless doctor visits, and the countless hours in Mr. Pelander's speech therapy class from kindergarten through fifth grade, working tirelessly to regain what lead poisoning had stolen, my ability to speak clearly. Lead robbed me of a carefree childhood and cast a shadow over my family, who lived with constant worry and uncertainty about my future.

Today, I share my story not for sympathy, but to put a face to the urgency of this issue. I speak for every child who drinks water from a tap that may be poisoning them. I speak for every parent who worries that the water in their home is harming their family. And I speak for every community forced to bear the burden of an outdated and dangerous infrastructure that has persisted for far too long.

House Bill 307, the Lead Line Replacement Act, is deeply personal to me, and critical for Ohio's future. This legislation takes decisive action to eliminate lead service lines across the state, ensuring that no family endures the health consequences, fear, and uncertainty that mine did.

The facts are stark. Ohio is home to an estimated 745,000 lead service lines, ranking third in the nation for the most remaining lead pipes. Cleveland alone ranks second in the country among cities with the highest number of legacy lead lines. Each year, nearly 4,000 children in Ohio are found to have elevated lead levels in their blood, a number likely underreported due to inadequate testing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has made it clear: there is no safe level of lead in our blood. Even minimal exposure can impair brain development, reduce IQ, and cause irreversible health damage.

House Bill 307 provides the tools to address this crisis. It requires all publicly-owned

water systems in Ohio to replace lead service lines within 15 years, removing this toxic threat from homes, schools, and daycares across the state. Importantly, it bans partial replacements, which can temporarily spike lead levels, and mandates that water systems provide filters and educational resources to protect families before, during, and after replacement. It also prohibits water shutoffs for families unable to pay for replacement costs and allows these costs to be equitably spread across the customer rate base.

Beyond the public health imperative, this legislation also brings significant economic benefits. By creating good-paying jobs, requiring prevailing wages for lead replacement projects, and establishing training and certification programs, House Bill 307 supports workforce development in Ohio's utility construction sector while stimulating local economies.

I believe the opportunity to act is now. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill allocated over \$700 million to Ohio for lead service line replacement over the next five years. These funds represent a historic investment in protecting public health and upgrading Ohio's infrastructure.

The potential return on this investment is staggering. A recent cost-benefit analysis by Scioto Analysis found that Ohio would see a public health and economic return of \$32 to \$45 for every single dollar invested in lead service line removal. Over the next 15 years, replacing these toxic pipelines is projected to grow Ohio's economy by \$145 to \$185 billion. These figures represent not just an economic boost but a transformation for our communities, creating jobs and ensuring safer futures for all Ohioans.

Other Midwestern states like Michigan and Illinois have already taken the critical step of requiring lead service line replacement to protect public health. It is time for Ohio to join them. This legislation ensures that every Ohioan, regardless of their zip code or income, has access to safe, clean drinking water.

I survived lead poisoning, but I should never have had to. No child should. It is unacceptable that, in 2025, we are still confronting this issue. Together, we can ensure that future generations of Ohioans never have to endure the harm that I did. House Bill 307 is our chance to get it right, to replace every lead pipe, to protect every family, and to give every child the opportunity to grow up healthy, strong, and full of potential.

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak on House Bill 307. It's now my honor to turn it over to my joint-sponsor, Representative Robb-Blasdel.