

July 16, 2021

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders,

Our organizations thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to clean and safe drinking water, public health, and environmental justice. As you implement the American Jobs Plan and Build Back Better agenda, we respectfully ask that you enact substantial spending for badly needed water infrastructure investments and in particular we emphasize the need for \$45 billion to replace the nation's lead service lines. Such investments will ensure that this unprecedented effort will leave a legacy of public health and justice for generations.

It is well known that there is no safe level of lead. Yet millions of lead service lines connect homes to drinking water throughout all 50 states, despite being banned in 1986. Recent events make the scope of this national problem clear. We've all seen the consequences of lead contamination throughout the U.S. in communities like Flint, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey. The States of Wisconsin, Kansas, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois are in the top five states per capita saddled with hundreds of thousands of lead pipes. Just this month, Clarksburg in West Virginia drew water samples at catastrophically high levels, up to hundreds of parts per billion. Illinois alone has from nearly 700,000 to over 1 million lead service lines, more than any other state.

Data also show clear inequities in lead exposure that must be corrected. Chicago alone has more lead service lines than any city in the nation, with an estimated 400,000 in use, with most of these pipes being situated in majority Black, brown, and low-income communities. A recent study found that Black and Latino communities in Illinois are as much as twice as likely to have lead service lines than predominantly white communities and that 95 percent of the lead service lines in the state are situated in communities where most Black and Latinx residents live. To this end, implementing measures to address crucial public health and inequity issues would be a significant step in addressing inequities across the lines of racial and wealth gaps while creating tens of thousands of good-paying jobs.

By contrast, failing to invest in water infrastructure and lead service line replacement will continue us down the path of immense environmental and public health harms and continue to degrade the trust Black and brown communities have in their government. We therefore urge you to continue the commitment you've always shown to public health and equality.

Our organizations prioritize clean water, human health, and an environment that protects all people. Water infrastructure and safe drinking water are inextricably linked to those goals. We once again respectfully request that you enact substantial water infrastructure funding as well as \$45 billion to replace the nation's lead service lines as part of the American Jobs Plan and Build Back Better agenda. Thank you again for your unwavering commitment to these values.

Sincerely,

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

BANCO

Clean Water Action

Earthjustice

Environment America

Environmental Defense Fund

For Love of Water (FLOW)

Freshwater Future

International Society for Children's Health and Environment

League of Conservation Voters

Michigan Environmental Council

Michigan League of Conservation Voters

Natural Resources Defense Council

People's Water Board Coalition

U.S. PIRG