



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

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**ANC 3/4G Resolution Urging the
Mayor and Council to Use
Federal Funds to Remove All
Lead Service Lines in the District**

1. The District has a unique opportunity to eliminate the continuing hazard posed by lead service lines in DC Water’s distribution system. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provides \$2.2 billion in federal funding for the District of Columbia.¹ These and other federal funds should be used to finally remove the primary source of lead in our drinking water.

¹ “How The New COVID Stimulus Bill Could Impact Business, Metro, And Child Poverty In The D.C. Region,” *dcist*, March 10, 2021, available at <https://bit.ly/3dHZMcE>. The proposed American Jobs Plan would, if enacted, allocate \$45 billion “to ensure no child ever is forced to drink water from a lead pipe.” “Biden Details \$2 Trillion Plan to Rebuild Infrastructure and Reshape the Economy,” *The New York Times*, March 31, 2021, available at <https://nyti.ms/3dFnXbD>. If this funding is distributed to the District of Columbia in the same proportion as the Rescue Plan, it would receive 1.3% or \$585 million.

2. For decades, DC Water customers have lived with the ever-present threat posed by the continued presence of lead service lines throughout the District.² Through misguided actions³ and heedless inaction,⁴ this hazard persists. The science is clear — there is *no* safe level of lead in drinking water.⁵ The presence of lead service lines poses a threat even when periodic sampling does not indicate lead because lead leaching is variable over time.⁶ DC Water and the District should no longer defer the only unequivocal

² See, e.g., “Getting The Lead Out? The D.C. Tap Water Crisis One Year Later,” National Resources Defense Council, January 25, 2005, available at <https://on.nrdc.org/39PTsyB>. “Lead in the District of Columbia Drinking Water: A Call for Reform,” DC Appleseed, October 2004, available at <https://bit.ly/3rmXKEz>.

³ For years, DC Water partially replaced lead service lines, a dangerous practice that can lead to acute, significantly elevated levels of lead in the water in the short- and long-term. Construction can disturb the pipe and release large flakes of lead, and over time, the pipes can corrode at the joint, causing lead to leach into the water flowing to our taps at home at a higher rate than before construction. See “The Hidden Costs & Dangers of Partial Lead Pipe Replacements, Natural Resources Defense Council, March 12, 2018, available at <https://on.nrdc.org/2H93jjS>. “[C]hildren living in homes with partial lead pipe replacements were four times more likely to have an elevated blood lead level than children living in homes without lead pipes.” “DC/CDC Lead Staff Report,” House Committee on Science and Technology Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, May 20, 2010, available at <https://bit.ly/3qpYreS>.

⁴ Thousands of homes across the District still have lead service lines. See DC Water Lead Service Line Map, available at <https://geo.dcwater.com/Lead/>.

⁵ The American Academy of Pediatrics has found that “there is no safe level of blood lead concentration for children,” and “the best ‘treatment’ for lead poisoning is to prevent any exposure before it happens.” See “AAP: No Amount of Lead Exposure Is Safe for Children,” Nursing Center, June 20, 2016, available at <https://bit.ly/3kOhRJo>. Lead poses considerable risks for children. The EPA has concluded that there is no safe blood lead level for children and recognizes that all sources of lead exposure should be eliminated. As such, the EPA has set the maximum contaminant level goal for lead in drinking water to zero. *Lead in Drinking Water | Sources of Lead | CDC*. Cdc.gov. (2021). Retrieved April 8, 2021, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources/water.htm>.

⁶ Sheldon V. Masters, Timothy A. Bertrand, and Chad J. Seidel, “Examining the Proposed Lead and Copper Rule Trigger Level,” Journal American Water Works Association, November 3, 2020, available at <https://bit.ly/3sZVuUq>.

solution — using available federal funding, DC Water must develop a plan and make a binding commitment to remove *all* lead service lines in the water delivery system within a decade.

3. In March 2020, DC Water’s CEO and General Manager, David Gadis, stated the authority’s goal “to remove all lead service lines by 2030. This is an ambitious goal, but together we must find alternative capital funding and contracting opportunities, and get the lead out of the water system.”⁷ In order to protect the health and safety of all District residents, that goal should be formalized — perhaps in legislation — and accompanied by concrete plans, including directing DC Water to prioritize tapping into already appropriated federal funds and a firm timetable for completion.
4. The existing programs have been a welcome start, but they offer only an inadequate, piecemeal approach. DC Water’s current lead service line replacement program, partially funded by the District, leaves many gaps in its coverage.⁸ In most cases, customers still have to opt into the program and pay all or a substantial part of the costs. This approach will not achieve the goal of removing all lead within any reasonable time.⁹
5. DC Water should propose a plan that can be implemented efficiently without relying on voluntary customer contributions. By systematically identifying lead service lines and replacing them fully using specialized crews and contractors, DC Water should be able to reduce the costs per replacement well below those incurred in the current patchwork program. A comprehensive approach will ensure that no one in the District will be left out and everyone will reap the benefits of water service lines that are lead-free.

⁷ DC Water Executive Budget Summary, Approved FY 2021, Adopted March 5, 2020, General Manager’s Message, page 3 (available at <https://bit.ly/36MK104>).

⁸ See “Lead Pipe Replacement Occurs During Construction Projects or By Request,” DC Water, <https://www.dewater.com/replacellead>.

⁹ There should be no distinction between replacement of the “public” portion of lead service lines and the “private” portion going to customers’ homes. DC Water can and should take responsibility for replacing *all* lead service lines. See Letter from Jennifer C. Chavez, Earth Justice, to Environmental Protection Agency, Re: Lead and Copper Rule Long-Term Revisions: Issues Regarding Lead Service Line Replacement, November 11, 2014, available at <https://bit.ly/30pn3K5>.

6. DC Water’s plan should include a realistic, independently audited estimate of the costs for water service lines that are lead-free, and the District should allocate federal funds to complete this work by 2030. There is plenty of blame to be shared for the history of lead contamination in our drinking water. Now it is time, however, to step up and pay the necessary costs to rectify past mistakes and prevent future harm to members of our community. DC Water has taken on much larger capital projects than this, and assuring safe drinking water is part of its core mission. DC Water should provide the Mayor and the Council with an independent, verifiable budget for the cost to remove *all* lead service lines, and the District should work with DC Water to secure the funding.
7. Lead free water should be a fundamental right of all District residents and it should be provided without cost. Removing lead from our drinking water is an investment in our future and an imperative to achieve equity. Lead contamination directly contributes to adverse health consequences¹⁰ that, in turn, affect our society and economy. One way to avoid leaving our most vulnerable residents behind is to assure that everyone has lead-free drinking water.
8. On April 1, 2021, Councilmembers Cheh, Nadeau, Pinto, Lewis George, Allen, and Bonds wrote Mayor Bowser indicating that DC Water had requested “that approximately \$350 million of the District’s federal relief funds be allocated to support DC Water’s lead service line replacement work.” The Councilmember characterized these federal funds as “a once-in-a-generation opportunity” and “an investment in the future of our children, helping ensure that thousands of District youth are not put at risk of the negative mental and physical health effects that stem directly from lead exposure.” They urged the Mayor “to set aside \$350 million of the

¹⁰ The World Health Organization concluded that “the consequences of brain injury from exposure to lead in early life are loss of intelligence, shortening of attention span, and disruption of behavior. Because the human brain has little capacity for repair, these effects are untreatable and irreversible. They cause diminution in brain function and reduction in achievement that last throughout life. . . . Lead also causes long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage. Exposure of pregnant women to high levels of lead can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight.” “Lead Poisoning and Health,” World Health Organization, August 23, 2018, available at <http://bit.ly/2LCp6pQ>.

federal relief funds received by the District for these important lead service replacement programs.”

9. ANC 3/4G advises the Mayor and the Council to act now to ensure water service lines are lead-free for every District resident by no later than 2030 and to include substantial funding, as requested by DC Water and six Councilmembers, in the FY 2021 budget to make this commitment an achievable reality.

ADOPTED at a regular public meeting notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of seven (7) of seven (7) members was present on April 12, 2021, by a vote of 7 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions.



Randy Speck, Chair



Lisa R. Gore, Secretary