

To Chair Casey & the members of the Committee on Municipal Government & Housing,

I'm writing today to urge you to **support H 5375** - the amendment to the Lead Poisoning Prevention Act that would greatly increase the efficiency and equity in our state's lead pipe replacement efforts.

My name is Devra Levy. I am a renter in Providence, in the Smith Hill neighborhood, in House District 2.

For 6 years, I was a community organizer at the Childhood Lead Action Project, a nonprofit that works to prevent childhood lead poisoning in RI through direct parent support, community education, and grassroots organizing and advocacy. During my time in this position, a major part of my job was outreach to Providence community members about lead pipe replacements. Time and time again, I heard from tenants that they were worried about lead contamination in their water, paying high prices for water filters, and would jump at the chance to have their lead service lines replaced. However, many of these tenants had landlords who live out of state, and who were unresponsive to attempts by Providence Water to get ahold of them and offer free lead service line replacements.

Around 60% of all Providence residents are renters (according to HousingWorks RI at RWU). This means over half of Providence residents aren't able to make their own decision about an infrastructure issue that affects the health of their families. Relying on absentee landlords to be responsive and willing to make this decision for their tenants presents a significant issue of equity and access, that ultimately affects the public health of our children and families.

Furthermore, this amendment would address barriers to lead service line replacement efficiency. As you may know, Rhode Island received over \$28,650,000 dollars in 2024 alone through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund specifically for lead service line inventories and replacements, with an estimated total of \$142,950,000 from FY2022-2026. Many cities and towns are actively replacing lead service lines - the most efficient way to do this is to replace all lead service lines on one block at once. When owners of specific households are unresponsive and don't sign up for replacements, this means replacements must be done piecemeal, which is more expensive and takes more time. Our community and our state government don't want to see these infrastructure funds go to waste.

H 5375 would allow municipalities to pass ordinances that would allow 1) water authorities to enter eligible properties to conduct free lead service line replacements with 72 hours notice, and 2) tenants to request and schedule free lead service line replacements, if their home is eligible. These changes would start to address the barriers laid out above.

Thank you for your consideration.

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