



Testimony Re: House Bill 5375
House Housing and Municipal Government Committee
April 22, 2025
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 5375. This bill would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances permitting the municipality or the water supplier to enter a property to perform a lead service line replacement if the property owner is eligible for a free service line replacement. It would also permit municipalities to adopt an ordinance allowing a tenant to request and schedule a private side lead service line replacement with their local water supplier in the event that the water service line in their rental property is found to contain lead, the property owner would be eligible for a free service line replacement, and the property owner is unresponsive to a request for a service line replacement.

Cities and states across the country have been replacing old lead service lines that carry water into homes. According to the Rhode Island Department of Health Office of Drinking Water Quality, 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. Since 2022, this money has been used across the state, and the period of the grant is still not over. This legislation provides an opportunity to address issues of access and efficiency in lead service line replacement programs as they are being developed and implemented.

As the law currently stands, homeowners must sign off on lead service line replacements, so unresponsive landlords leave tenants at a loss with no option but to continue using their lead pipes. House Bill 5375 would amend the law to give tenants and municipalities options to replace lead service lines.

[Lead poisoning](#) is a serious and entirely preventable children's health and environmental justice issue with lifelong consequences, affecting hundreds of Rhode Island children every year. Lead exposure, even at very low levels, can cause irreversible damage, including slowed growth and development, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and neurological damage. Though rare, severe poisoning can result in seizures, comas, and even death. The societal costs of childhood lead poisoning include the loss of future earnings

due to cognitive impairment and increased medical, special education, and juvenile justice costs.

Lead exposure occurs in places where children spend the most time, especially in their homes. Exposure can come from lead paint in older homes, contaminated soil, and contaminated drinking water from tens of thousands of remaining lead service lines statewide.

In Rhode Island, prevention, surveillance, and enforcement mechanisms have resulted in a significant decline in the number of children with lead poisoning. House Bill 5375 would remove barriers to lead service line replacement programs, streamlining access and maximizing participation of eligible homes to reduce childhood lead exposure.

Thank you for the leadership that the General Assembly has shown on working to prevent childhood lead poisoning. We urge you to pass House Bill 5375 to continue protecting children and families from preventable lead exposure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.