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Subject: MEDIA ADVISORY: Senator Farmer and Representative Nixon File Legislation to Filter Lead Out of School Drinking Water
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MEDIA ADVISORY

January 14, 2022

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***** MEDIA ADVISORY for TUESDAY, JAN. 18th at 10:30 am *****

Senator Farmer and Representative Nixon File Legislation to Filter Lead Out of School Drinking Water

Tallahassee, FL — Amid a growing concern for the health and safety of children in public schools across the country, State **Senator Gary Farmer (D-Fort Lauderdale)** and State **Representative Angie Nixon (D-Jacksonville)** have filed [SB 1648](#) / [HB 1245](#), legislation to ensure that that drinking water in Florida's schools is lead-free and meets expert established safety standards.

“Lead is a potent neurotoxin affecting children's learning, growth, and behavior. Children in schools, many low-income and Black communities all across this state, are at risk of being poisoned simply by drinking water out of a fountain they falsely assume will be safe. The Florida Constitution guarantees our children the right to safe and equitable education, and that's what I fight for every day. I look forward to working with House members on both sides of the aisle to make 2022 the year we get the lead out and save our children,” said **Representative Nixon**.

Senator Farmer added, “Implementing safeguards to ensure our school children have access to safe drinking water is a nonpartisan issue we can all get behind - and this is the year to do it! Within the last two weeks the US Department of Education released the final allotment of over \$2 billion in funding coming from the American Recovery Plan Act. There's a time limit on this funding, and ensuring clean drinking water for our kids is an unquestionable obligation for this Legislature. There is no guarantee these funds will be allocable the next time the legislative session rolls around, which makes it absolutely imperative for us to act now.”

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency and the American Academy of Pediatrics, even low levels of lead exposure in children have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system. Lead toxins can cause learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells all of which affect a child's mental and physical well-being throughout their entire life.

Currently, Florida's 67 school districts have an optional lead testing program and most districts across the state don't test for lead in the water on public school campuses. In the counties where lead has been tested over 50% return some lead content with a number of schools testing at dangerous levels. Given that many of these schools were built before the EPA decreased the acceptable standard for lead in pipes from 8% to 0.25%, it is safe to say that most public schools do have lead in their water and that many have toxic levels that go hidden and unreported, posing a continued threat to the health and well-being of our students.

Senator Farmer emphasized, "There is an easy, low cost solution to this problem that would cost less than 3.8% of the \$2.38 billion the Florida Department of Education received through the American Recovery Plan to eliminate almost all of the lead currently poisoning our children in schools. We are putting this bill forward because we know that our children matter. Passing this bill just makes sense and it will show that both parties are looking out for the welfare of our children and the future of Florida."

Senator Farmer and **Representative Nixon** will be working hand-in-hand with citizen advocates in a coalition of twenty-one different organizations across the state including Physicians for Social Responsibility Florida (PSR Florida), Florida Student Power Network, Florida Voices for Health, the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Sierra Club and Environment Florida.

Dr. Howard Kessler, President of PSR Florida stated, "PSR Florida has advocated for the removal of lead in school drinking water in Florida schools for a number of years because clean water for children is ground zero for healthcare and child safety. Many people in Florida just assume their children have safe access to drinking water while in school. Our greatest struggle has been educating people to let them know that most districts in Florida still have toxic levels of lead poisoning in school drinking and cooking water. Twenty twenty-two is the year to catch up to people's assumptions and get the job done. We don't even have to use state money. The legislature can direct the Florida Department of Education to budget item clean drinking water by passing this legislation and do what should have been done decades ago."

WHO: Representative Angie Nixon, Senator Gary Farmer

WHAT: Introducing [SB 1648](#) / [HB 1245](#)

WHEN: January 18, 2022 @ 10:30 a.m.

WHERE: Senate Office Building Portico, Tallahassee

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