

Testimony of Scott Weishaar, Parent at Capitol Hill Montessori @ Logan
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Committee on Education and Transportation & the Environment; Committee on Education
Joint Hearing on Summer Modernizations and the Childhood Lead Prevention Act of 2016

Thursday, October 6, 2016

Good morning/afternoon. I'm Scott Weishaar, parent of a first grader at Capitol Hill Montessori @ Logan, a city-wide school my daughter has attended since she was 3.

I want to begin by thanking the council, especially councilmembers Allen, Cheh, and Grosso. Thank you for listening to us when we sounded the alarm on the lead-in-school-drinking-water crisis. Thank you for acting swiftly and purposefully in oversight hearings to begin restoring the accountability of DGS and DCPS. And thank you for initiating efforts to mandate the prevention of childhood lead exposure through an amendment to the Healthy Schools Act of 2010.

Although significant gains have been made, the so-called "crisis of confidence" unfortunately persists. Specifically, DGS has failed to sufficiently "consult[] with...school faculty, parents, and students," which is called for in the amendment to the Healthy Schools Act. School staff, parents, and students are the most invested stakeholders, and therefore the most effective mechanism for ensuring ongoing accountability. Keeping them in the dark undermines the ability to hold DGS (and also DCPS) accountable.

At CHML, we have continued to experience a lack of transparency relating to the lead issue. For example:

- Despite DGS and DCPS policy reflected in their online FAQs, CHML families and the principal were not notified of testing performed on 13 water sources in August of this year, nor of the results of those tests
 - The results were posted in a pdf document found several levels deep on the DGS website, but we don't believe this reflects open communication and transparency
- DGS has not provided CHML with any data on filters—such as which water sources were filtered to date and which ones were not, when filters were installed, when those filters are due for replacement, whether they've been replaced, etc.
 - After digging, we found a link on DGS's website that might reference these data; unfortunately, the site is password protected and we don't have the password
- Despite our repeated explanation to DGS and DCPS that classroom sinks are used in the Montessori curriculum to prepare food, it does not appear that sinks were included in the August testing

We must work together to ensure a sufficient level of consultation with key stakeholders. We kindly ask for the following modifications to the Childhood Lead Prevention Amendment Act:

1. New subparagraph D-i of the Act proposes that the designation of drinking water sources occur "in consultation with...school faculty, parents, and students," among other entities.
 - a. Please require publicly available documentation of such consultation in the form of an agreed-upon list of all water sources (by bar code) at each school, with a clear indication of whether the water source has been designated as a drinking water source
 - b. Please require clear and visible signage to be posted on water sources not designated as drinking water sources
2. Amended subparagraph G requires the "results of...testing and remediation efforts" to be posted online within 5 business days of receiving results or remedial action

- a. To ensure accountability, it is not sufficient to rely on parents or staff to continually check a website for new information. Accordingly:
 - i. Please require testing results to be communicated to the school principal, at a minimum, within 5 business days of receiving results
 - ii. Please require remediation actions to be communicated to the school principal, at a minimum, within 5 business days of that action
- b. Please require an updated, publicly available list of all water sources (by bar code) that includes the following information: date of last test performed, last test result, indicator of whether the source is filtered, and, if applicable, date filter was installed and filter expiration date

As you continue to shape this legislation and as DGS and DCPS carry out their responsibilities, we very much look forward to partnering with you and those agencies to guarantee that all stakeholders are heard, most importantly children and the parents, teachers, and school leaders entrusted with their care.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.