



COMMITTEE ON *DEMOCRATS*  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT**

Andrew Souvall — (202) 225-5735

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. as prepared for delivery  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittees on Environment & the Economy and Health  
Hearing on “Flint Water Crisis: Impacts and Lessons Learned”**

Thank you for holding this hearing today. This Committee’s jurisdiction over public health and the environment makes us uniquely positioned to address the future in Flint, and I am glad we are beginning that process today.

I remain extremely concerned about this water and health crisis. Flint has been without safe drinking water for far too long. It’s important that we all recognize that all levels of government will need to invest untold millions, if not billions, to mitigate the damage to Flint residents caused by this man-made disaster.

This hearing is an opportunity to address how we move forward and ensure that anyone impacted has access to support and assistance as long as necessary. We must decide what is needed to fix Flint’s infrastructure and address the potential impacts lead contamination may have on Flint’s children, which will take years.

The people in Flint need a fully functional drinking water system that delivers safe water to their homes. We need to take a hard look at whether the re-establishment of corrosion control is working to prevent further leaching from lead service lines. And, we need to know more about what is required to have those pipes removed and replaced.

There are also significant health needs that must be addressed.

Flint’s residents, especially the children, will require a suite of services, including ongoing testing and monitoring for lead exposure. They will also likely need a range of behavioral health, educational, and social services going forward. Thankfully, our Medicaid program is structured just for emergencies like this one; moving forward, our task will be to

ensure that every affected child in Flint is not only enrolled, but also receiving the services they need through Michigan's Medicaid program.

Today is also an opportunity to begin to address the problems beyond Flint. For instance, in New Jersey, the Newark school system has ordered that water be turned off at 30 schools due to the presence of lead. Flint reminds us that if we fail to properly invest in health and safety the consequences can be devastating, and, in many instances, we will need to invest even more resources in response if we wait. We must act now to ensure Americans throughout the country do not suffer from these same problems.

Congress banned the use of lead in new pipes 30 years ago, but between 3.3 and 10 million older pipes remain in use throughout the country today. Families living in homes connected to these pipes all across the country are potentially at risk from lead leaching from these aging pipelines into their plumbing.

Children are most affected by these aging pipelines and the associated negative health effects linked to lead exposure. The CDC estimates that half a million U.S. children ages one to five have blood lead levels that exceed the agency's guidelines of 5 micrograms per deciliter. As deeply concerning as these statistics are, they understate the problem. The current scientific consensus holds that no amount of lead in the blood is safe for children.

It is long past time for a serious conversation in this country about the dangerous lack of federal investment in our drinking water infrastructure and in our public health system. The Safe Drinking Water Act needs to be strengthened: EPA needs more authority to set health protective standards for all drinking water contaminants. And, we need to invest in our water systems to ensure safe drinking water. We also must ensure the necessary resources for providing health coverage to monitor and address lead poisoning as well as preventing lead poisoning in the first place.

Thank you to all of the members of both subcommittees here today for your continued attention on this issue. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can all work together to ensure a strong future for the residents of Flint.

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