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July 15, 2025

**Re: Final Guidelines – Water Infrastructure Grants – Securing Our Children’s Future Bond Act**

Dear Commissioner Dehmer,

We applaud the New Jersey Department of Education for [releasing the application for school districts to access more than \\$94 million in funding](#) through the *Securing Our Children’s Future Bond Act* (P.L. 2018, c.119). This long-awaited opportunity represents a critical step forward in protecting students from lead and other harmful contaminants in drinking water.

As members of [Lead-Free NJ](#) (LFNJ)—a statewide collaborative working to eliminate lead exposure with a focus on racial and economic equity—we respectfully urge the Department to reconsider the current application timeline and take immediate action to extend flexibility to districts in need.

The grant application opened on **June 25, 2025**, and is scheduled to close on **July 25, 2025**. This four-week window poses significant challenges for school districts, particularly because it falls during peak summer recess. Many school boards do not meet in July, and administrative staff often take scheduled time off. Since the application requires a Board of Education resolution, these timing constraints create a significant barrier—especially for the under-resourced districts that need this funding the most.

To ensure equitable access and maximize participation, we strongly urge the Department to:

- **Accept a simple statement of intent by the July 25 deadline** in lieu of a full application.
- **Extend the deadline for full applications to August 31, 2025**, aligning with the existing timeline for lead testing and analysis reimbursement.

Clear and timely communication is essential to the success of this funding opportunity. When districts have sufficient notice and support, they are far better positioned to secure resources that safeguard student health. Without this flexibility, many districts—particularly those with limited capacity—may be unable to apply, undermining the intent of this vital funding.

We are actively supporting outreach to school districts across the state to raise awareness and encourage participation. But we cannot do this work effectively if the window for action is too narrow.

Lead is a potent neurotoxin with irreversible effects on children’s development. Every effort must be made to ensure that this funding reaches the communities that need it most. We urge you to act swiftly to revise the application timeline and ensure that no child is left behind due to preventable delays in the grant process.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Yvette Jordan, LFNJ Advocacy  
Coordinating Committee  
Co-Chair, Retired Educator

Debbie Mans, LFNJ Steering  
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