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October 2, 2025

**Re: Request for Support and Guidance for School Districts– Water Infrastructure Grants – Securing Our Children’s Future Bond Act**

Dear Commissioner Dehmer,

We applaud the New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE) for [extending 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) to October 31. The provision of this long-awaited fund presents the opportunity for critical resources needed to protect 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 consider supporting school districts through outreach, education, and technical assistance that provides the necessary guidance to improve the number and viability of applications.

- We recommend providing application guidance and answering applicant questions in a recorded webinar format. Lead-Free NJ offers to host the webinar on our Zoom platform, inviting NJ DOE as a speaker.
- We also recommend that NJ DOE conduct proactive outreach to school districts with the highest lead in drinking water test results. The school districts were required to report results for the 2024-2025 school year.
- Finally, we also recommend using funds for department capacity to help administer the grant.

The grant application opened on **June 25, 2025**, and is scheduled to close on **October 31, 2025**. This extended window poses a significant opportunity for school districts to benefit. Since the application requires a Board of Education resolution, proper guidance and expertise could eliminate constraints that create a significant barrier—especially for the under-resourced districts that need this funding the most.

Clear guidance and technical assistance are necessary to ensure districts are supported through the application process. When districts have insufficient guidance and support, they lack the capacity to secure the resources that safeguard student health. Without this support, 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 hope that the Department will consider our request. As we are sure you are aware, there is no safe level of lead. 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.



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Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

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