



LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

June 7, 2016

Mayor Tom Barrett
City Hall
200 E. Wells Street, Room 201
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett,

As you may know, the Guardian recently released a report indicating that 33 US cities used water testing “cheats” when doing their lead testing of water. Since 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency has warned that pre-flushing water prior to testing yields inaccurate results because it flushes lead out prior to testing. The report specifically named Milwaukee as having used this method in its most recent testing cycle.

This article prompts several questions:


- 1) Did Milwaukee go against EPA guidelines by “pre-flushing” lead pipes prior to testing?
- 2) If yes, how many such pipes were tested using this tactic?
- 3) If yes, does the city have any plans to retest these homes?
- 4) What information and resources are being provided to home owners at risk?

With 70,000 lead laterals pumping potentially dangerous water into homes throughout Milwaukee, this is an issue we should all be very concerned about. Removing these pipes could take years, maybe decades. Given this reality, we must do everything in our power to protect people from lead poisoning in the meantime.

Children are particularly at risk to lead poisoning. In Wisconsin, 4,000 children tested positive for elevated lead in the bloodstreams; 60% of those kids live in Milwaukee. In 2015, 4.9 percent of Flint children tested had lead in their blood at levels known to cause health problems. In 2014, 8.6 percent of Milwaukee kids tested above that same level.

Due to the severity of this crisis, it will take alignment of all levels of government to find a solution. The state has proposed a modest grant to assist. There is a multibillion dollar lead pipe abatement bill pending at the federal level. In the meantime, people need to be tested and treated for lead poisoning. Is the city doing any work to help get our residents tested, treated and obtain water filters? I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,


Senator Lena C. Taylor
4th Senate District



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CC: Wisconsin DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp
Wisconsin DHS Secretary Kitty Rhoades
Milwaukee Commissioner of Health Bevan Baker
Milwaukee Water Works Commissioner Carrie Lewis
US Senator Ron Johnson
US Senator Tammy Baldwin
US Representative Gwen Moore
