



Ohio Environmental Council
[Action Fund]

February 7, 2024

To: Members of the Ohio House of Representatives
From: Pete Bucher, Chief of Staff, Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund
Re: House Bill 226

Dear Honorable Representatives,

I am writing to inform you that the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund will be scoring House Bill (HB) 226 for the purposes of our Legislative Scorecard for the 135th Ohio General Assembly. **We urge a yes vote on HB 226.** To the extent that HB 226 passes, the OEC Action Fund will be doing extensive public education on the content and the votes on this legislation due to its positive impact to Ohio's drinking water quality and the health of Ohioans.

Every Ohioan—no matter if they're from Youngstown or Dayton, Cleveland or Cincinnati, Toledo or Athens—deserves clean, safe, and affordable drinking water. That's why we're thrilled to see direct investments in Ohio's public water infrastructure from the state and federal administrations for [removal of lead service lines](#).

In Ohio, we've been dealing with the threat of lead pipes contaminating our tap water for decades. Even though the use of lead pipes was banned by Congress in 1986, Ohio currently ranks second in the nation for the most lead pipes serving families, with an estimated 650,000 still in use.

HB 226 will make changes to help remove financial barriers to homeowners in an investor-owned water utility's service area to remove the portion of the lead service line that is on their property. Under the provisions of this legislation, a private water utility that is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) may relieve the customer of this large upfront cost and perform the replacement on their behalf. Customers who chose to pay for the replacement themselves will also have a mechanism to seek reimbursement for the project costs. From a public health perspective, it is essential that lead services are fully removed, including both the customer-owned and utility-owned portions of the line. Otherwise, the threat of lead poisoning will remain for a homeowner.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 226 to move towards full replacement of lead service water lines in Ohio's private water systems. We also urge the Ohio Legislature to appropriate additional resources to support both public and private water systems in achieving the full removal of all 650,000 lead service water lines that remain in Ohio and that pose a major public health risk.

If you have any questions, please email me at pbucher@theoec.org.

Sincerely,

Pete Bucher
Chief of Staff
OEC Action Fund