



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## CRITICAL LEGISLATION TO ENSURE SAFE DRINKING WATER IN SCHOOLS SIGNED INTO LAW

SUSAN SERINO September 6, 2016

| ISSUE: **CHILDREN'S HEALTH, LEAD TESTING, EDUCATION**



HYDE PARK, NY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) announced today that a bill she co-sponsors to ensure the safety of drinking water in schools was signed into law.

“Parents across New York put the health and safety of their children in the hands of their local schools for much of their young lives,” said Senator Serino. “Lead contamination can have absolutely devastating effects on a child’s development and we have an obligation to

ensure that the water they are exposed to throughout the school-day is without contamination. With school back in session, it is critical that we remain vigilant to ensure that our students are consistently safe.”

As noted in the bill’s justification, children are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, as their bodies absorb the toxin faster than an adult’s body would. High levels of lead in the blood are especially damaging to young children as it can cause brain damage and have a direct impact on a child’s ability to learn.

Currently, federal rules providing guidelines for the testing of water for lead contamination are not mandatory for schools. This has led to incidents of lead contamination found within schools across the state.

This bill will ensure that regular testing is completed so that parents, teachers and students can rest assured that the water they rely on throughout the day is safe and free of contamination. To fund the regular testing, the bill allows for the use of school building aid apportionments, and schools with water containing unacceptable amounts of lead would be eligible for additional financial assistance when considered a ‘construction emergency project’ so as not to burden cash-strapped school districts.

Buildings built after 2014 will be exempt from the testing, and those schools testing negative would be granted waivers.