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Honorable Congressman Paul Tonko, Chairman
Sub Committee on Environment and Climate change
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 205515-6115

Good morning. It is an honor to speak before the Congressional Subcommittee on Environment and Climate, and I'd especially like to thank Congressman Paul Tonko for extending the invitation.

As you may know, Newark completed a significant infrastructure project, replacing all the City's 23,000 lead service lines in three years. No other city has removed and replaced lead lines as fast, efficient, and effective. Moreover, we did this with no cost to residents in either capital outlay, taxes, or water rate hikes. We also did it by investing our own money and using the state revolving loans program (NJ-I-Bank) thru the federal government that contributed a \$200 million project.

The new bi-partisan infrastructure bill will be the most significant investment in the nation's necessary functions I've seen in my lifetime. This bill is an essential step in the right direction to providing safe drinking water to everyone in America. In addition, the federal government will invest in infrastructure upgrades and provide economic capital to communities. Like many others in New Jersey, I have witnessed these investment benefits firsthand and would like to share them with this committee.

I'd first like to talk about how our service line replacement program was the investment in human capital and a solution to a long-neglected problem. Of the \$200 million spent to repair the lines, about 70 percent of that money stayed in the City. We hired local Newark contractors' subcontractors and emphasized that they hire Newark residents from the union apprentice program. We created a unique program with assistance from the city department workforce development, the state department of labor, and union local 472. This apprenticeship program trained and taught dozens of our residents the skills and earned middle-class wages offered by union jobs. As more cities replace lead lines and start water infrastructure with federal infrastructure money, our residents will find continued employment. In addition, we helped women- and minority-owned businesses find opportunities for project support in everything from engineering inspections to printing door hangers to inform our residents. One of the tremendous successes is the joy of community being a part of economic investment.

Now, I'd like to share the five components of our lead line project we feel every City, Town, and State must put in place, so funds reach their maximum potential effectively and efficiently at all levels with excellent outcomes.

- 1) Engage with your state revolving loan program early as possible; these conversations will help you understand the process, limits, and funding terms for construction and long-term financing.
- 2) Since lead service lines are the homeowner's property, we had to ask our state legislature to pass a law allowing us to use public funds on private property. This legislation allowed us to offer lead-line replacement to residents for free. Without it, many residents who could not afford abatement replacement would remain vulnerable to the impact of lead in drinking water. Others, including landlords, could have refused based on cost.
- 3) Schedule meetings with your local, county, and state elected officials regarding legislation and jurisdictional permitting.
- 4) In Newark, most disadvantaged people rent as in other major cities, which compromised 74 percent of the resident are renters. Therefore, our City Council needed to pass an ordinance that allowed us to go onto private property without the owner's consent. While at first, this might feel like government overreach, it saved us an enormous amount of time tracking down landlords, getting their permission, and gaining access. Renters mustn't be at the mercy of landlords to get the purest water possible.
- 5) With access and cost no longer an issue, we were able to ask for maximum performance from our contractors to advance down our streets, replacing every line, block by block. This approach saw us repairing as many as 120 pipes a day as 25 crews worked around the City.

We showed in Newark that we had the political will to get it done, and it takes the commitment of all levels of government to approve funding and other legislation to make such a program possible.

The problem of contaminated drinking water, like many health issues, disproportionately affects Black and brown people in cities across America but is indiscriminately found in suburbs and rural communities alike. It is, therefore, a crisis of significant magnitude.

Lead is only part of the problem. We have a looming crisis with forever chemicals like PFAS, PFOS, and PFOAs infrastructure bill funding can be applied to tackle these problems. However, we have learned from lead that temporary solutions don't always work and become more costly over time. For example, in 1986, an estimated \$6 billion was needed to replace the nation's lead lines. Now the price tag is estimated more than ten times the amount. Another problem is our country's outdated, aged, and disrepair water wastewater systems.

I hope this bill makes leaders throughout the country decide to no longer 'kick the can down the road' and invest in their people and community by doing needed infrastructure work.

Thank you again for allowing me to tell our story.

City of Newark



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