

Media Advisory...



from State Representative La Shawn K. Ford

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Ford Calls on Governor to Eliminate Chicago Poisoned Water and Improve State's Inadequate Water Supply

CHICAGO – State Representative La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, calls on Governor JB Pritzker to eliminate lead poisoning in Chicago’s water supply and address water supply issues in other areas of the state.

“The Illinois General Assembly recently passed a capital bill to rebuild Illinois’ out-of-date water supply structure across our state,” said Ford. “Repairing and rebuilding our roads, bridges, public transportation, public spaces and water supply structures are essential for a stronger economy and public safety, so I support the \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois capital projects. This plan must target the conditions of Illinois’ water supply infrastructure. Healthy, robust and safe water supply infrastructure must rise to the top of our priorities for families in Illinois. Evidence shows we have high levels of lead in Chicago’s water supply and we need to replace lead service lines. A great deal of water is lost underground. Unsafe water supply is harmful to our families’ health, and insufficient water supply adds an unnecessary financial burden on families across Illinois.”

The Chicago Tribune wrote a major investigative story on October 25, 2017, finding that Ford Heights, Illinois residents pay nearly six times more for the same amount of water than residents of the wealthy, predominantly white town of Highland Park. Ford Heights taxpayers pay four times more for water than people living in Chicago. Ford Heights is not alone, and similar problems exist in Harvey and Maywood, according to the Tribune. Ford Heights’ 2,800 residents must access their drinking water from Lake Michigan through both Hammond, Indiana and Chicago Heights, Illinois, while other communities in Cook County get water directly from Lake Michigan. Of the ten towns with the highest water rates, five, or 50 percent, are majority-black towns, the Tribune found.

According to the Chicago Tribune, Mayor Lori Lightfoot recently put Chicago’s aggressive water meter program on hold last month due to city testing finding brain damaging lead levels that increased in more than 1 in 5 metered homes sampled. Of 510 homes tested since 2017, 22% had elevated lead levels in tap water after a meter installation, Conner said. About 7% saw lead levels spike higher than 15 parts per billion three times greater than the Food and Drug Administration’s standard for bottled water.

Ford applauds Mayor Lightfoot for taking action and hopes Governor Pritzker sees the seriousness off the issue and signs SB 1724, for which Ford was the Chief House Sponsor. The effort

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establishes a collaboration between the University of Illinois-Chicago Government Finance Research Center and the Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH) for the issuance of a report that offers policy and regulatory recommendations. The bill when signed and funded by the governor will study:

- Reasons for increase in water rates;
- The defining of affordability throughout the state and any variances;
- Evidence of rate-setting that utilizes inappropriate practices;
- The extent to which state or local policies drive cost increases or variations in rate-setting;
- Challenges within economically disadvantaged communities in setting water rates; and
- Opportunities for increased intergovernmental coordination for setting equitable water rates.

“Governor Pritzker must see our unsafe and inadequate water supply as a public health crisis and take emergency action to rebuild the water supply in Illinois immediately,” said Ford.

Also See:

EPA Study: [Chicago Lead in Drinking Water Study](#)

Chicago Tribune Story: [Lightfoot pauses water meter installations after city finds spikes of brain-damaging lead in homes](#)

SB1724: [REPORT-SETTING OF WATER RATES](#)

For more information, please contact Ford’s constituent service office at 217-782-5962 or email Repford@lashawnford.com.

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