



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May, 2019

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #583

### Water Filtration Grants (DPI -- Categorical Aid)

[LFB 2019-21 Budget Summary: Page 336, #36]

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#### CURRENT LAW

No provision.

#### GOVERNOR

Provide \$250,000 GPR annually for water filtration grants. Require DPI to award grants beginning in 2019-20 to school districts to purchase water bottle filling equipment that includes a water filtration component.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. According to a Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) report titled "2016 Report on Childhood Lead Poisoning in Wisconsin," approximately 5% of the 86,771 children tested for lead in the state in 2016 had a level of lead in their blood that was above the recommended level. Children from low-income families, particularly those residing in Milwaukee or Racine, are more likely to experience lead poisoning because they are more likely to live in older houses with lead-based paint or pipes. In Milwaukee, 10.8% of tested children met the criteria for lead poisoning in 2016, while in Racine 6.2% of children met the criteria in that year. DHS indicates that any amount of lead exposure can cause brain damage and result in life-long effects on learning, behavior, and health.

2. Some have expressed concern over children's exposure to lead through water pipes in their schools. The DHS report indicates that lead pipes and solder were commonly used in pipes prior to 1986. As a result, pipes located in older school buildings could be a source of lead exposure.

3. The bill would provide \$250,000 for water filtration grants, and require DPI to award

grants to school districts to purchase water bottle filtration equipment. According to the Executive Budget Book, the purpose of the program is to "assist districts to install water bottle filling stations with filters that reduce harmful toxins, such as lead and nitrates," in pupil drinking water.

4. DPI indicates that in 2018-19, there are 2,216 public school buildings located in the state, and approximately 860,000 pupils enrolled in public schools. Based on these figures, the amount in the grant would be sufficient to provide grants of approximately \$113 per school building, or \$0.30 per pupil per year. It could be argued that given the severity of the issue and the long-term consequences of lead exposure, more funding should be provided for water filtration. For example, the Committee could consider increasing the funding to \$2.5 million GPR annually beginning in 2020-21, which would provide funding of approximately \$1,100 for each school building in each year, or about \$3 per pupil. [Alternative 2]

5. On the other hand, it could be the case that the funding in the bill would be sufficient to begin the installation of water filters in a small number of school buildings, and the program could be expanded statewide in future years. It is also the case that many school buildings in the state are not at risk of exposing pupils to lead, especially those buildings that were constructed in the last thirty years.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$250,000 annually for water filtration grants

ALT 1	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$500,000	\$0

2. Provide \$2,500,000 for water filtration grants beginning in 2020-21.

ALT 2	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$2,500,000	\$2,000,000

3. Take no action.

ALT 3	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	- \$500,000

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