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Montgomery Co. to improve school drinking water standards



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May 16, 2019 5:20 am



Montgomery County will lower the maximum acceptable level of lead in schools from 20 ppb to 5 ppb. (Getty Images/Jupiterimages)

There will be stricter lead standards for drinking water in Maryland's Montgomery County Public Schools under a bill being signed into law by County Executive Marc Elrich.

Elrich plans to sign three bills Thursday afternoon that were recently passed by the county council.

"Younger children are particularly susceptible to the health effects associated with lead," said Councilmember Tom Hucker, who pushed for the lead bill.

Under the measure, the maximum acceptable level of lead in schools will be lowered from 20 parts per billion (ppb) to 5 ppb.

Testing recently showed that nearly 240 school water fixtures had levels exceeding 20 ppb while many others had levels between 5 ppb and 20 ppb.

The state of Maryland's limit is 20 ppb but other jurisdictions in the area have their own. For instance, D.C. uses 5 ppb and Prince George's County has a 10 ppb limit.

“There is no safe level of lead exposure,” Hucker said.

“Montgomery County should update our level and establish a new standard that is more protective.”

The second bill being signed by Elrich Thursday involves the county police department. It will require investigators from an independent agency to review cases of police-involved deaths (<https://wtop.com/montgomery-county/2019/05/maryland-county-head-to-sign-police-transparency-measure/>) and determine whether charges should be filed.

“At least two experienced investigators from an independent law enforcement entity will open an inquiry reviewing the circumstances of the case,” county officials said in a statement.

The third bill will stop county government from requesting pay stubs and pay history when determining an employee’s salary.

According to the legislation, “since wages for women generally lag behind wages for men, and wages for women of color lag even further behind wages of white men, basing a starting salary on a person’s current salary is likely to result in an adverse impact on the future wages of women employees.”

Elrich will sign the bills at ceremonies in the Executive Office Building in Rockville.

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Pet of the Week: Hannah

How can you say no to this adorable face and those big, beautiful brown eyes?