



March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear Senator Niemeyer and Distinguished Committee Members,

The Paramount Health Data Project (<https://healthdataprotect.org/>) is an Indiana based non-profit that has been leading the way in leveraging health data in educational settings for more than a decade. During the summer of 2022 we reviewed the health data of students across Indiana and existing policy. Based on this analysis we identified two legislative priorities for the 2023 session as the most prominent health and safety issues facing Indiana students. I published these topics in an August 2022 Indiana Capital Chronicle Commentary Article, "A New Era of School Safety: Closing Loopholes" (<https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2022/08/02/a-new-era-of-student-safety-closing-loopholes/>) The two topics were 1. Lead Contamination in Schools and 2. Teacher Misconduct. We are pleased that Rep. Jackson and Senator Niemeyer have come together across party lines to be tireless advocates for lead contamination and putting Indiana students first in HB 1138. We are here today to vehemently support the passage of HB 1138.

In 2010, myself and a successful school leader in Indianapolis were deeply concerned about a group of kindergarteners that were ALL showing signs of lead poisoning. We did not want to label them all for special education services. Our efforts led us to look for answers took us outside of the usual education records. This research led to the birth of our organization. According to our quantitative data, the pipeline to prison starts with lead. The issue of lead contamination in water was thrust into the national conversation during the Flint Michigan water crisis (<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis>). According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), "Lead exposure can affect nearly every system in the body and is associated with numerous behavioral and learning problems (e.g. reduced IQ, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, juvenile delinquency, and criminal behavior). Research indicates that even low levels of lead in a child's blood can affect IQ, the ability to pay attention, and academic achievement" (<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/data/index.htm>). The effects of lead on a child's academic performance and mental health are truly devastating. The overarching effect of lead exposure on entire communities is also overwhelming because it drowns the promise and hope of the children in that community, overwhelms schools, and silently devastates families with young children. Finally, after decades without interventions the criminal justice systems in these communities become overwhelmed.

An important part of this conversation is that with the right data we can implement strategic and targeted lead mitigation in the most affected communities and see tangible outcomes that changes lives and communities. This legislation can help us reduce the number of students that are inappropriately placed in special education and increase academic achievement faster than any other intervention we know of. By being proactive and engaging with preschools in affected areas, we have the greatest opportunity to help some of Indiana's most vulnerable kids and make notable impact on the cycle of poverty in these communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Azure DS Angelov". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "D".

Azure DS Angelov, Ph.D.  
CEO Paramount Health Data Project