

Date of Hearing: August 20, 2025

# ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 724 (Richardson) – As Amended May 5, 2025

Policy Committee:	Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials	Vote:	7 - 0
	Housing and Community Development		12 - 0

Urgency: No      State Mandated Local Program: Yes      Reimbursable: Yes

## SUMMARY:

This bill requires the owner of a public housing unit owned or managed by a local housing authority, to provide information to the residents of the public housing unit regarding any applicable existing program that offers free testing of the water for lead.

## FISCAL EFFECT:

By requiring certain local governments to provide a higher level of service, this bill creates a state-mandated local program. If the Commission on State Mandates determines this bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state may need to reimburse these costs to local governments (General Fund).

It is not known to this committee or to the author's office how many public housing units are owned or managed by cities, counties, and public housing authorities. For context, the Housing Services Department at the City of Los Angeles administers the Public Housing Program and oversees the management of 13 large Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles-owned public housing developments consisting of over 6,300 units located throughout the city. The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency manages the Public Housing Program on behalf of the both the city and county of Sacramento and assists over 12,000 families by providing over 3,000 affordable housing units.

The federal Lead and Copper Rule requires water systems to monitor lead and copper levels at the tap. If the local government (a city, for example) is the entity that provides water service and owns public housing units, costs incurred by the city to provide residents with information about exiting lead testing programs is likely to be fairly minor and absorbable. If the local government does not have this information readily available or is not the water supplier, it may need to coordinate with the relevant water district or agency, as well as conduct (and periodically update) its own research, to provide its public housing residents with lead testing information. It is reasonable to assume these costs, in the aggregate, may exceed \$150,000.

## COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Lead consumption among youth and disenfranchised communities occurs at a higher rate. Assisting public housing residents with the resources and appropriate standards to ensure the water people drink

are safe will help us protect our communities. California should take the responsible steps to ensure public housing residents receive adequate lead testing standards.

- 2) **Background.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), research shows that there is no safe level of lead in drinking water, and even very low levels can have negative and irreversible health effects, especially for children and pregnant persons. Lead in young children can result in reduced IQ, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, behavioral problems, stunted growth, impaired hearing, and kidney damage. According to the CDC, people with low incomes and people of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods with outdated infrastructure, and are thus more likely to be exposed to lead-based paint and pipes, faucets, and plumbing fixtures containing lead.

Recent sampling in the Watts community of Los Angeles found levels of lead exceeding the federal maximum contaminant level in several properties owned by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. The city and housing authority plan to conduct further testing in the public housing units in that neighborhood and across Los Angeles. For a detailed overview of state and federal laws regulating the lead content of fixtures, please see the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee's analysis of this bill.

Writing in support of the bill, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) contends that by increasing awareness of no-cost testing programs in public housing, where lead exposure risks may be elevated due to older infrastructure, "we can better inform families to safeguard their health." ACOG further notes: "The bill does not create a new testing requirement or burden for housing authorities; it simply ensures that existing resources are communicated to the residents who need them most."

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