

Health and Human Services Committee
LB 899
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Judy Martin, Deputy-Director
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Campbell and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Judy Martin (J-U-D-Y M-A-R-T-I-N). I am the Deputy-Director of the Division of Public Health in the Department of the Health and Human Services. I would like to thank Senator Baker for introducing LB 899 on behalf of the Department.

LB 899 will make a technical modification to the “Lead Free” definition in the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act to make it consistent with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. This will simply codify changes that were implemented in 2014.

The Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act (part of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act) took effect on January 4, 2014. This revised the maximum lead content of wetted surfaces of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings, and fixtures from not more than 8.0% to not more than a weighted average of 0.25% lead.

Our current definition of “lead free” in the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act is 8.0% and should be 0.25% to be consistent with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. This change would only be a technical update because our public water systems in Nebraska were notified, trained, and implemented this change with the federal law in 2014. Since 2014, suppliers have not been permitted to sell materials for drinking water systems that do not meet the new standard. In addition, public water systems do not have to immediately replace fittings; rather, when replacing parts they must use new parts that meet the requirements.

The new definition is specific to drinking water and does not impact pipes, fitting or fixtures that are used exclusively for non-potable services such as manufacturing, industrial processing, irrigation, etc.

We have notified our stakeholders, the Nebraska League of Nebraska Municipalities, the Nebraska Rural Water Association, the Nebraska Section of American Water Works Association, and the Nebraska Well Drillers Association, about this bill and the need for our state law to be consistent with the federal definition of “lead free.” They understand the need for this change.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today. I believe LB 899 will help DHHS continue our mission of helping people live better lives. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.