AN ACT Relating to taking action to address lead in school drinking water; adding a new section to chapter 28A.210 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 43.70 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.195 RCW; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1) The legislature recognizes that the United States environmental protection agency and centers for disease control and prevention acknowledge that there is no known safe level of lead in a child's blood. Even low levels of lead exposure can cause permanent cognitive, academic, and behavioral difficulties in children. The American academy of pediatrics recommends government action to ensure that the lead concentration in drinking water at schools does not exceed one part per billion.

(2) The legislature finds that the department of health sampled and tested drinking water outlets in 551 elementary schools between 2017 and 2020. 82 percent of these schools had lead contamination of five or more parts per billion in one or more drinking water outlets and 49 percent of these schools had lead contamination of 15 or more parts per billion in one or more drinking water outlets.

(3) The legislature acknowledges that the department of health was appropriated $1,000,000 in the fiscal 2019-2021 biennium to
continue the testing for lead contamination in school drinking water. The legislature also finds that the office of the superintendent of public instruction was appropriated funds in the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium for the healthy kids/healthy schools initiative. Part of these funds are for the purpose of distributing grants to school districts for remediation of elevated lead levels in drinking water. The legislature encourages districts to apply for these grants when lead test results reveal elevated lead levels, which are lead levels above five parts per billion.

(4) The legislature acknowledges the historically inequitable distribution of lead exposure for communities of color and of low socioeconomic status and plans to make a priority the protection of children from the dangers of lead exposure through school drinking water. The legislature, therefore, intends to require that drinking water outlets in elementary and secondary school buildings built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016 be tested for the presence and level of lead contamination by June 30, 2026, and every five years thereafter. The legislature also intends to require that schools notify the school community of lead test results and develop action plans for remediation if test results exceed the health-based standard of five parts per billion.

(5) The legislature recognizes that the youngest children are the most vulnerable to lead exposure and that many of these children spend significant amounts of time at child care facilities. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature that the department of health and the board of health regularly review scientific evidence of the effects of lead contamination in drinking water at child care facilities and consider adopting lead testing and remediation rules that are more protective than the federal rules.

(6) This act is named for the director of the Washington public interest research group who developed and advocated for this legislation before dying of cancer in 2019 and may be known as the Bruce Speight protect children from being exposed to lead in school drinking water act.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.210 RCW to read as follows:

(1) This section applies to schools with buildings built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016.
(2) With respect to sampling and testing for lead contamination at drinking water outlets, a school shall either:

(a) Cooperate with the department so that the department can conduct sampling and testing as required under section 3 of this act; or

(b) Contract for sampling and testing that meets the requirements of section 3 of this act and submit the test results to the department according to a procedure and deadlines determined by the department.

(3) Beginning January 1, 2022, a school shall make available on a public website the most recent results of testing for lead contamination at drinking water outlets in buildings that meet the requirements of subsection (1) of this section. New test results must be made available on the website within 30 days after receipt.

(4) Annually, beginning September 1, 2021, preferably at the beginning of the school year, a school shall communicate with students' families and staff about lead contamination in drinking water. The school shall consult with the department or a local health agency on the contents of the communication, which must include: The health effects of lead exposure and that there is no safe level of lead in drinking water; the website address of the lead test results; and information about, and a comparison of lead test results with the federal threshold, the state threshold, and the American academy of pediatrics recommended threshold for remedial action to reduce lead contamination in drinking water.

(5)(a) For a lead test result that reveals an elevated lead level, as defined in subsection (6) of this section, at a drinking water outlet, the school's governing body shall develop and adopt a school action plan in compliance with the requirements of this subsection.

(b) The school action plan must:

(i) Be developed in consultation with the department or a local health agency regarding the technical guidance, and with the office of the superintendent of public instruction regarding funding for remediation activities;

(ii) Include remediation activities that adhere to the technical guidance; and

(iii) Include confirmatory retesting.
The school's governing body must provide the public with notice and opportunity to comment on the school action plan before it is adopted.

(d) The school action plan adoption deadlines are as follows:

(i) For lead test results received between July 1, 2014, and the effective date of this section, for which a school did not take remedial action or for which retesting has not confirmed that the elevated lead level has been reduced to below five parts per billion, the school's governing body shall provide notice of elevated lead levels in the communication required under subsection (4) of this section and adopt an action plan by November 1, 2021; and

(ii) For lead test results received after the effective date of this section, the school's governing body shall adopt an action plan within six months of receipt.

(6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Department" means the department of health.

(b) "Drinking water" means any water that students have access to where it is reasonably foreseeable that the water may be used for drinking, cooking, or food preparation.

(c) "Drinking water outlet" means any end point for delivery of drinking water, for example a tap, faucet, or fountain.

(d) "Elevated lead level" means a lead concentration in drinking water that exceeds five parts per billion, unless a lower concentration is specified by the department in rule.

(e) "School" means a school district and the common schools, as defined in RCW 28A.150.020, within the district; a charter school established under chapter 28A.710 RCW; or the state school for the blind or the state school for the deaf established under RCW 72.40.010.

(f) "Technical guidance" means the technical guidance for reducing lead in drinking water at schools issued by the United States environmental protection agency until the department complies with section 6 of this act when the term means the technical guidance developed by the department.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. A new section is added to chapter 43.70 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department shall conduct sampling and testing for lead contamination at drinking water outlets in school buildings built, or
with all plumbing replaced, before 2016 as specified in this section. The department meets the requirements of this section when a school contracts for sampling and testing that meets the requirements of this section and submits the test results to the department according to a procedure and deadlines determined by the department.

(2) Sampling and testing for the presence and level of lead in drinking water must meet the technical requirements described in the technical guidance.

(3)(a) Initial testing for lead contamination in drinking water must be conducted between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2026. (b) Retesting for lead contamination in drinking water must be conducted no less than every five years beginning July 1, 2026.

(4) The department shall enter a data-sharing agreement with the office of the superintendent of public instruction for the purpose of compiling a list of school buildings built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016.

(5) The definitions in section 2 of this act apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 43.70 RCW to read as follows:

The department shall allow state-tribal compact schools established under chapter 28A.715 RCW to opt into sampling and testing for lead contamination at drinking water outlets in school buildings built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016 pursuant to section 3 of this act.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 28A.195 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A private school shall contract for sampling and testing for lead contamination at drinking water outlets, as defined in section 2 of this act, in school buildings built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016 as required by this section.

(2) Sampling and testing for the presence and level of lead in drinking water must meet the technical requirements described in the technical guidance, as defined in section 2 of this act.

(3) Deadlines for initial testing and retesting are as provided in section 3 of this act.

(4) A private school shall meet the requirements provided in section 2 of this act related to communicating with students'
families and staff about lead contamination in drinking water, making lead test results available on a public website, and developing and adopting a school action plan.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. A new section is added to chapter 43.70 RCW to read as follows:

The department shall develop and make available technical guidance for reducing lead contamination in drinking water at schools that is at least as protective of student health as any technical guidance on this topic issued by the United States environmental protection agency. The technical guidance must include the technical requirements for sampling, processing, and analysis, including that analysis must be conducted by a laboratory accredited by the department of ecology. The technical guidance must describe best practices for remediating elevated lead levels at drinking water outlets in schools. Provisions of the technical guidance related to testing for the presence and level of lead in drinking water, as opposed to testing to identify sources of lead for remediation, must be designed to maximize detection of lead in water, and therefore must prohibit sampling or analytical methods that tend to mask lead contamination, including prestagnation flushing and removal of aerators prior to sampling.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. A new section is added to chapter 43.70 RCW to read as follows:

After July 1, 2030, the department may, by rule, define "elevated lead level" at a concentration less than five parts per billion if scientific evidence supports a lower concentration as having the potential for further reducing the health effects of lead contamination in drinking water.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 8. A new section is added to chapter 43.70 RCW to read as follows:

(1) To the fullest extent permitted by federal law, the department, rather than community water systems, is designated as the lead or principal agency in regard to lead in drinking water sampling, testing, notification, remediation, public education, and other actions at public and private elementary and secondary schools as required by the federal lead and copper rule, 40 C.F.R. Part 141.
(2) The department must issue a written waiver that exempts community water systems that serve schools from the sampling and testing requirements of 40 C.F.R. Part 141.92 related to schools if the department determines that the mandatory requirements for sampling and testing for, and remediation of, lead contamination in drinking water outlets at elementary and secondary schools under this act are consistent with the requirements in 40 C.F.R. Part 141.92 of the federal lead and copper rule.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 9. This act may be known and cited as the Bruce Speight protect children from being exposed to lead in school drinking water act.

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