
From: Ridley, Nancy (DHHS)
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Subject: MEDIA CLIPS for 10 02 15

- [State to announce Flint water action plan Friday at Kettering](#)
 - [Legislators take action to fix Flint water supply](#)
 - [Who's to blame for Flint's water crisis? Virginia Tech researcher points the finger at MDEQ](#)
 - [Michigan governor grudgingly admits Flint water danger](#)
 - [Grand Traverse Co. Eviction Diversion Program Helps People Keep Their Homes](#)
 - [Henry Ford outbreak strain Id'd as Salmonella Isangi](#)
 - [Officials probe salmonella cases at Detroit hospital](#)
 - [Community organizations, political leaders urge U.S. to accept more refugees](#)
 - [A Hole in the Safety Net Offered by the Affordable Care Act](#)
 - [Program helps children who experienced trauma](#)
 - [Maine has found a stunning way to keep the poor in poverty](#)
 - [Connections – for communities that care](#)
 - [Be aware of 'super' lice, resistant to treatment](#)
 - [Public health emergency declared due to lead in Flint water](#)
 - [Don't drink Flint's water, Genesee County leaders warn](#)
 - [Grand Traverse County Child Abuse Trial Enters Second Day of Testimony](#)
 - [Confidential student tip line is saving lives, Attorney General says](#)
 - [Documents: Mom, child miles away when grandmother shot father](#)
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State to announce Flint water action plan Friday at Kettering

MLive – October 1, 2015, By Ron Fonger

FLINT, MI — Local, state and federal officials are set to announce a plan for addressing concerns with [lead in Flint's drinking water](#) at a news conference Friday, Oct. 2.

An advisory from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality said leaders will announce the plan at 1:30 p.m. at Kettering University.

The news conference comes after weeks of [worrisome news](#) about rising levels of lead in the city's tap water, documented by researchers from Virginia Tech university and a study by a Hurley Medical Center doctor that showed the number of children in the city with elevated blood levels nearly doubled after the city started using the Flint River as its water source in 2014.

Brad Wurfel, director of communications for the DEQ, said Thursday, Oct. 1, that [Gov. Rick Snyder](#) cannot attend the news conference.

Snyder said earlier this week that he expected state officials to announce plans to deal with the lead in water issue by Friday, saying, "There are probably some things that weren't as fully understood when that switch was made."

The state oversees water quality in Flint, and state-appointed emergency managers were running city government when decisions were made not to negotiate a short-term agreement to continue buying Lake Huron water from Detroit and to instead use the river as a water source.

Although the city is not currently in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act, bacteria, the level of total trihalomethanes and lead have been problems in the water system since then.

Among those scheduled to attend the news conference are Mayor Dayne Walling; Harvey Hollins, director of the state Office of Urban Initiatives; Dan Wyant, director of the Michigan DEQ; Nick Lyon, director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services; and Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive of the state Department of Health and Human Services, the news release said.

Wurfel would not discuss the plan in advance of the news conference, but officials in local, state and the federal government have called for a variety of actions in recent weeks.

Among them: Funding for home water filters, additional testing of city water and reconnection of Flint to the Detroit water system.

"We're looking forward to coming to Flint. We recognize lead is a concern in the city," Wurfel said.

http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/10/state_will_announce_flint_wate.html

Legislators take action to fix Flint water supply

Detroit Free Press – October 1, 2015, By Kathleen Gray

LANSING — The Michigan Legislature is beginning to take notice of the ongoing controversy surrounding Flint's water system, which has been plagued by problems with discoloration and foul smells since the city disconnected from the Detroit water system and began pulling its water supply from the Flint River.

The state Senate approved a supplemental appropriations bill that included a \$100 placeholder while the state looks for a solution to the water issue.

"We want to make sure we have an accurate number. We didn't want to put too much in or not enough," said state Sen. Jim Ananich, D-Flint. "We want to get an accurate understanding of what it's going to cost to get us the help that we need."

The appropriation comes on the heels of Gov. Rick Snyder telling reporters on Wednesday that he'll have some more answers on the state's role in fixing Flint's water problems by the end of the week. The state Departments of Environmental Quality and Health and Human Services is scheduled to hold a news conference at 1:30 p.m. in Flint Friday to discuss a comprehensive plan to deal with Flint's controversial water system.

It also occurred as the Genesee County Board of Commissioners and Health Department issued an emergency advisory to Flint residents on Thursday, telling them to refrain from drinking the city water unless it was filtered through a certified filtration device or had been tested and showed that it doesn't contain elevated lead levels.

"Since no safe level (of lead) has been identified, it is in everyone's interest to reduce exposure to lead as much as possible," the emergency advisory stated.

Jamie Curtis, chairman of the commissioners, said they had little choice. Curtis said he had asked the state last week for a response after a Hurley Medical Center pediatrician reported that blood-lead levels had jumped in Flint children since the city began pulling water from the Flint River.

But instead of hearing from the state, he read in the Free Press Wednesday that Gov. Rick Snyder publicly acknowledged that Flint's water supply "appears" to have problems. That, Curtis said, was in conflict with assurances from state officials earlier this year that the water was safe.

"It wasn't our fight," Curtis said of the decision to change water systems in 2014 and to temporarily pull water from the Flint River. "I (couldn't) care less who's at fault ... but now we need to deal with this health issue. In six years I don't want 5- and 6-year-olds going to school with lead poisoning."

DETROIT FREE PRESS

Gov. Snyder says action coming on Flint's water woes

An anonymous benefactor and the state have begun distributing water filters to Flint residents in recent weeks after the Hurley doctor spotted what she said are increasing lead levels in Flint children. The state has spent \$4.2 million already this year, said Snyder spokeswoman Sara Wurfel, including \$2 million from the distressed communities grant program for water infrastructure work and some help with bonding that helped save the city another \$2.2 million.

"We've been actively working that issue for a significant period of time and providing additional resources recently," Snyder said. "I would expect us to have more to talk about by the end of the week, and how we're partnering with Flint and the federal government on this."

DETROIT FREE PRESS

Lead-poisoned Flint kids will pay price for water switch

In 2014, city officials ended the city's contract with the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, saying that water costs were too high. They opted instead to pull from the Karegnondi Water Authority, which is building a system to supply Genesee County with water pulled from Lake Huron. In the long run, this will mean lower water costs, officials have said, adding that water from the Detroit system will cost \$1.5 million more a month than the city is paying now.

But until the new system comes online in 2016, Flint is temporarily pulling water from the Flint River. Since it made the switch, residents have complained that the water smells, is discolored and makes them sick.

And the Hurley researcher recently found that the number of Flint children with elevated blood-lead levels — 5 micrograms per deciliter or more — jumped from 2.1% in the 20 months prior to Sept. 15, 2013, to 4.0% between Jan. 1 and Sept. 15 this year. In certain ZIP codes, the change was even more troubling, she said — jumping from 2.5% of the children tested to 6.3%.

Ananich said filters need to be made available to affected residents, especially vulnerable citizens like children and senior citizens, and the corrosion in the water system pipes needs to be addressed.

"And I think we need to move to a new water source, potentially going back to Detroit," he said. "Filters can do a lot of good, corrosion control can do some good. But a new water source has to happen and it has to happen soon."

In addition to the action at the state level, the Flint-based Coalition for Clean Water, the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, and the Natural Resources Defense Council has petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to take emergency action to ensure that Flint has safe drinking water. The petition urges the EPA to reconnect Flint to the Detroit water system and provide safe water to city residents until that can happen.

"Flint city officials, state-appointed emergency managers and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality have all failed monumentally in their duty to provide the people of Flint with clean, safe drinking water. Now that the truth is revealed, further action is imperative," said Kary L. Moss, ACLU of Michigan executive director, in a statement.

In addition to the money for the Flint water issue, the appropriations bill approved by the Senate also included a \$7.7-million settlement of a lawsuit filed by a Flint woman whose car was hit by a Michigan State Police trooper who was pursuing a driver who refused to stop for a seat-belt violation.

The woman and her daughter were injured in the July 3, 2014, crash and another passenger, Jacqueline Nichols, 64, of Flint, was killed. Trooper Timothy Fagin received undisclosed discipline after the crash and remains a state trooper

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2015/10/01/legislators-take-action-fix-flint-water-supply/73152540/>

Who's to blame for Flint's water crisis? Virginia Tech researcher points the finger at MDEQ

Michigan Radio – October 1, 2015, By Mark Brush

Yesterday, Gov. Rick Snyder admitted that the decision to switch the city of Flint's water supply from Detroit's system over to the Flint River was not well planned.

"In terms of a mistake, what I would say is, there are probably things that were not as fully understood as when that switch was made," Snyder said.

At the direction of the state-appointed emergency manager, the city made the switch in April 2014, and problems with the drinking water started soon after.

People complained of brown water. There were boil-water advisories after the water was found to have E. coli contamination, and the drinking water also had unsafe levels of a chlorine byproduct (total trihalomethanes).

Fast forward almost a year and a half, and now we learn some residents in the city are being exposed to unsafe levels of lead in their drinking water.

How could one of Michigan's major cities be facing this problem?

Marc Edwards, a civil engineering professor from Virginia Tech University and a nationally renowned expert on water treatment, has put the blame squarely on the agency in charge of overseeing the safety of Flint's drinking water, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

[Listen to our conversation with Edwards here:](#)

Edwards published a blog post yesterday in which he writes:

Given MDEQ's insistence that there is absolutely nothing wrong with Flint water, we have created a timeline that illustrates how MDEQ's mistakes and deception created the Flint water crisis in the first place.

In his timeline, Edwards says the state failed to require that the city have a corrosion-control program in place when the city switched over to Flint River water.

Edwards says current estimates are that Flint has about 15,000 drinking water service lines made of lead.

"What we discovered to our shock was that they switched to a new water source that was obviously very corrosive, meaning it would eat up the lead pipe and iron pipe and essentially put the metals into the water, without controlling the corrosion," Edwards says. "And this is a horrible idea in a city full of lead plumbing and lead pipe like Flint."

Edwards says current estimates are that Flint has about 15,000 drinking water service lines made of lead.

How dangerous metals can get into drinking water

When water flows through copper and lead pipes, it can take up some of the metal and make the water unsafe. To control for this problem, the Environmental Protection Agency has what's called a "lead and copper rule."

The purpose of the rule is listed in this “quick reference guide:”

Protect public health by minimizing lead (Pb) and copper (Cu) levels in drinking water, primarily by reducing water corrosivity. Pb and Cu enter drinking water mainly from corrosion of Pb and Cu containing plumbing materials.

To keep these metals from leaching into drinking water, municipal treatment plants can change the water chemistry to lower the water’s ability to corrode these pipes.

It’s called “corrosion control,” and Edwards says the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality covered up the fact that Flint had no corrosion control program in place.

“Before you switch to a new water source, six months to a year ahead of time, you are supposed to do laboratory experiments to determine the corrosivity of the water,” says Edwards. “And the chemistry – the pH, the alkalinity, and the phosphate that you need to make sure that the lead stays on the pipes and out of the water.”

Edwards contends that the new water system had to have a “corrosion control” plan in place so that “you’re not doing an uncontrolled human experiment on a city’s population.”

According to emails obtained by the ACLU of Michigan, a state MDEQ official, Stephen Busch, responded to a request from EPA Region 5, the federal agency that oversees MDEQ, that the new water system in Flint did have a corrosion control program in place.

That exchange occurred in February of this year.

In April, according to the emails, the EPA Region 5 official later found out that was not true. Flint, it turns out, did not have a corrosion-control program in place.

From the emails:

Pat Cook [of MDEQ] has confirmed that following the disconnection from Detroit, Flint has not been operating any corrosion control treatment, which is very concerning given the likelihood of LSLs [lead service lines] in the city.

The state has maintained that it is not required under the EPA’s lead and copper rule to have a corrosion-control plan in place until two rounds of testing are completed to determine what that plan looks like.

More from Michigan Radio’s Lindsey Smith:

At face value, the EPA rules are clear, all water systems that serve more than 50,000 people must have some kind of corrosion control.

But when you switch water sources, there is apparently some room for interpretation.

In approving updates to this federal regulation in 2000, the EPA noted that “water systems need to make treatment changes, on occasion, to react to changing circumstances.”

In these cases, the rule does not “prevent a state from approving treatment changes,” but it’s not entirely clear if the state can approve having zero corrosion-control treatment.

As Edwards understands it, the EPA should have acted once the agency found out the state had no corrosion-control plan in place in Flint.

"If there was ever a case where [the] EPA should exert emergency powers and take primacy away from an agency, this is it," he said.

Edwards says the city was also not conducting tests for lead and copper properly.

The point of the lead and copper rule is to make sure cities are sampling homes that are high risk – that is, homes serviced by lead pipe.

An ACLU of Michigan investigation found that the city did not know whether it was testing homes serviced by lead pipes.

In this video, Michael Glasgow, the utilities manager for Flint, indicated the city doesn't know where the lead pipes are.

"We throw bottles out everywhere just to collect as many as we can just to hit our number," said Glasgow.

More from Marc Edwards' blog post:

By law, at least 50 percent of the homes sampled must be verified to have lead pipe, and the remainder of homes sampled must have been built before 1986 and known to have lead solder. There is no basis for believing that this requirement was met in either the 2014 or 2015 LCR sampling events conducted by the City. Hence, the City of Flint has not had a valid LCR sampling event since the switch to Flint River water.

Edwards contends that even though the city did random sampling instead of "worst case" sampling, the results were still over the action level for lead.

Solving the problem

Edwards says there has been very serious damage done to the pipes by using corrosive water in the system, but he expects that if the city were to switch back to water from Detroit, lead levels in the drinking water would likely drop in one month.

He says his biggest concerns have been alleviated since the advisories about lead in the water have been put out. People now know about the danger.

"You can learn to live with lead in the water. The big problem is not knowing that you have high lead in the water because you cannot protect yourself."

Lead filters, flushing the water, and treatment can be used to mitigate the problem of lead in the water.

Tomorrow, we're supposed to hear from the state about what it plans to do to tackle the problem. And critics will likely push officials as to why they haven't addressed this problem sooner.

<http://michiganradio.org/post/whos-blame-flints-water-crisis-virginia-tech-researcher-points-finger-mdeq#stream/0>

Michigan governor grudgingly admits Flint water danger

World Socialist Web Site – October 2, 2015, By James Brewer

After more than a year of stonewalling by officials in the state of Michigan, Governor Rick Snyder admitted publicly on Wednesday that there was a problem with the water in the city of Flint. Speaking to the press in Lansing, he responded to a question about the correctness of the decision to use Flint River water: "In terms of a mistake, we found there are probably things that weren't as fully understood when that switch was made."

He continued, “Again, we’re looking at making sure they’re within safe limits according to the federal government, and I would expect us to have more to talk about this subject before the end of the week, in terms of more tangible action items.”

Recent scientific studies have proven the toxicity of the water supply for tens of thousands of people, and the resulting public outrage has forced both state and local officials to change their tune.

Snyder pushed through the state law establishing the legal dictatorship of appointed emergency managers over elected municipal officials and then appointed Darnell Earley as the emergency manager in Flint. Earley (who has moved on to a similar position as emergency manager of the Detroit Public Schools) ended Flint’s decades-long contract with the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department in April 2014 and switched the city’s water source to the Flint River.

Less than a week ago, Hurley Children’s Hospital Pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha confirmed at a press conference that lead levels in the bloodstreams of Flint children were significantly higher after the disconnect from the DWSD.

Four percent of children five years old and younger had lead levels of over 5 micrograms per deciliter—the level considered “elevated” by the Center for Disease Control—up from 2.1 percent before switch to Flint River water. (New studies reveal that there is no safe level of lead in the bloodstream.) The Hurley results and recommendations corroborated the study done by a Virginia Tech university team led by noted water infrastructure engineer Dr. Marc Edwards.

The Hurley report recommended that residents stop using tap water for mixing infant formula, that pregnant mothers not use city water and that certified lead-clearing filters be distributed. Hanna-Attisha recommended connecting to water from Lake Huron as soon as possible. She also urged the city to issue a health advisory so federal funds can be made available to address the crisis.

Three days earlier, Hanna-Attisha and Mott Children’s Health Center CEO Dr. Lawrence Reynolds met with Flint Mayor Dayne Walling, current Emergency Manager Natasha Henderson and Public Works Director Howard Croft to present the findings before they were made public. They were told that reconnecting to Detroit water would bankrupt the city.

The day after the press conference, a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson issued a response disputing the connection of lead levels to the change of water source, saying “our data is not in line” with that of Hanna-Attisha. In an email, Snyder called the Hurley data “spliced and diced.”

The *Detroit Free Press* then published its own analysis of state data, which corroborated Dr. Hanna-Attisha’s study. The article stated, “Despite the state’s efforts to discredit the Hurley data, the state’s own data show that there are a higher percentage of kids in Flint with elevated lead levels in their blood after the switch.”

The *Free Press* ran an editorial the same day, “Snyder must act on Flint lead crisis,” holding the governor responsible for the water crisis. It stated: “Snyder hasn’t hesitated to appoint or retain emergency managers in struggling cities across the state, a stance the *Free Press* Editorial Board has largely supported, with one caveat: Emergency managers have to make things better.”

For some 17 months, Flint residents have confronted indifference and deception by city and state officials. Complaints that unsafe water was being piped into their homes were answered with the same refrain: the decision was irreversible due to insurmountable financial obstacles.

Along with that, a torrent of lies and half-truths from official sources insisted that the water supplied to residents from the city’s new source, the Flint River, met state and federal safety regulations. To this day that is still the official line, despite the evidence from independent testing.

After the Hurley report, Flint schools have announced that they would no longer use tap water and have requested donations of bottled water for the students.

The exposure of backroom dealings has contributed to popular outrage. It was revealed on September 29 that Governor Snyder had arranged for delivery of 1,500 water filters to an organization called Concerned Pastors for Social Action, to distribute to Flint residents, with the stipulation that the source could not be revealed. The stock was distributed to residents, who stood in line, in just three hours.

After it was revealed that Snyder had worked with an unnamed private donor who paid the cost of the filters, Reverends Allen Overton and Alfred Harris said they had cooperated to ensure that the filters were delivered. Harris said, "If the water was OK, why would the governor work with someone to provide the filters? I think the state working with the private donor is an admission (that) the people needed some help."

"Our objective was to help the people. (Now) everybody is trying to cover their behinds," Harris added.

In the Virginia Tech team's [initial report](#), Edwards raised the question: "How is it possible, that Flint 'passed' the official EPA Lead and Copper Rule sampling overseen by MDEQ [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality]?"

Considering the serious effects that lead poisoning has on children in particular, the question is completely reasonable. The state agency responsible to oversee the safety of drinking water provided to the public served as a rubber stamp for reckless decisions made for purely financial reasons.

On September 25, the MDEQ responded belatedly by posting an [FAQ item](#) on its website, "Water Lead Levels in the City of Flint." The document is a blatant attempt at deception. Its second point reads:

"Does the city meet federal drinking water standards for lead and copper?"

Yes, the city is meeting state and federal guidelines for lead and copper."

The document goes on to assert: "But the State and federal guidelines for lead and copper acknowledge an important reality: Any home that has a lead service connection or lead plumbing will impart some varying amount of lead into the home's water." The implication is that this is not MDEQ's problem.

But as Edward's research pointed out, the known corrosive chemistry of the Flint River water is what is responsible for the leaching of lead from plumbing into residents' water. The water delivered to the home may be acceptable, but once it passes through the pipes inside the home, the inevitable chemical reaction makes it toxic.

Flint officials did nothing to address this issue when they made the switch from DWSD water, which is treated for corrosivity. The only reference to this by the MDEQ is an assertion that when the city joins the Karegnondi Water Authority next year (official estimates for completion of the pipeline is late 2016) corrosion control treatment will be in place.

A Flint Water Study [commentary](#) dated September 30, titled "MDEQ Mistakes and Deception Created the Flint Water Crisis," cites a letter from MDEQ communications Director Brad Wurfel to the *Flint Journal* smearing the work of the Virginia Tech team. The letter reads, in part:

"...this group specializes in looking for high lead problems. They pull that rabbit out of that hat everywhere they go. Nobody should be surprised when the rabbit comes out of the hat, even if they can't figure out how it is done ... while the state appreciates academic participation in this discussion, offering broad, dire public health advice based on some quick testing could be seen as fanning political flames irresponsibly. Residents of Flint concerned about the health of their community don't need more of that."

The Flint Water Study commentary goes on to establish a [timeline](#) of the deception by the MDEQ, using documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. It draws the conclusion that the MDEQ, the City of Flint and the US

Environmental Protection Agency “have proved themselves unworthy of the public trust. Flint residents have been left to fend for themselves, when it comes to dealing with the dangers of high lead in their water.”

<http://www.wswhs.org/en/articles/2015/10/02/flin-o02.html>

Grand Traverse Co. Eviction Diversion Program Helps People Keep Their Homes

9 & 10 News – October 1, 2015, By Adora Namigadde

An Eviction Diversion Program in Grand Traverse County is helping people who face losing their homes.

The Northwest Community Action Agency, Department of Health and Human Services and 86th District Court are working together to help pair people with local organizations to help get them back on track.

Then, landlords and tenants sit down to hopefully reach an agreement.

“That is really a critical piece that people don't understand. They just think, 'Oh I got an eviction, I'll move on to the next place.' Well, that eviction can really stop or hamper them from getting or attaining rental housing in the future,” says NMCAA homeless programs manager Melodie Linebaugh.

It's better to act sooner than later.

If you think you might be facing eviction, call (231) 922-4580 and ask to be directed to the Eviction Diversion Program.

<http://www.9and10news.com/story/30161904/grand-traverse-co-eviction-diversion-program-helps-people-keep-their-homes>

Henry Ford outbreak strain Id'd as Salmonella Isangi

Outbreak News Today – October 1, 2015, By Robert Herriman

In a follow-up report on the inpatient outbreak of salmonella at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan health officials have now identified the specific strain as Salmonella Isangi, [according to a Detroit Free Press report](#).

The relatively rare strain, in this case, is not believed to be foodborne.

To date, 14 patients from one hospital ward have been infected and the source of the outbreak remains a mystery. It has not been reported the type of hospital unit in which the outbreak has occurred.

Although not often seen, [a multi-drug resistant strain of Salmonella Isangi](#) has been implicated in a nosocomial outbreak affecting inpatient pediatric patients in South Africa last decade.

Jim Collins, director of the communicable diseases division of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services told the [Detroit Free Press](#) although other types of salmonella are not uncommon, Salmonella Isangi has been reported just four times in the past five years in Michigan.

<http://outbreaknewstoday.com/henry-ford-outbreak-strain-idd-as-salmonella-isangi-37873/>

Officials probe salmonella cases at Detroit hospital

Health Leaders Media – October 1, 2015

More than a dozen patients at a Detroit hospital were sickened last week with salmonella from an unknown source, officials said.

There is no evidence the illness spread through food to infect 14 patients at Henry Ford Hospital, according to a statement from hospital officials.

Seven patients remain hospitalized but "are doing well," officials said Wednesday.

They are in isolation as a precaution.

No new patients have been identified this week, officials said.

"Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is working in partnership with Henry Ford Hospital to investigate this occurrence," officials said in the statement.

"Salmonella is not typically life-threatening and, in most cases, goes away in less than a week, even if untreated."

<http://healthleadersmedia.com/content/QUA-321193/Officials-probe-salmonella-cases-at-Detroit-hospital>

Community organizations, political leaders urge U.S. to accept more refugees

The Arab American News – October 1, 2015. By Ali Harb

DEARBORN — Political leaders and community organizations at the local and national levels urged the White House to increase the number of Syrian refugees to be accepted into the United States.

Last month President Obama pledged to grant asylum status to 10,000 Syrians over the next year.

ACCESS and the Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC), Michigan's leading Arab American aid nonprofits, which provide services to refugees, both asked the government to grant asylum status to a greater number of Syrians.

"We are absolutely ready and willing to accommodate more refugees from Syria," ACC President Haifa Fakhouri told The Arab American News. "We ask the government to allow more refugees to come here. We feel the agony of distress of the people fleeing war in the Middle East and we should comfort them to the best of our ability."

The ACC president urged the community to be united in advocating on behalf of refugees and help provide them with shelter, healthcare and employment, once they arrive.

Asked about concerns that refugees might be a burden on American society, Fakhouri responded, "that's nonsense." She added that the United States has always been a welcoming country.

"This country was built by immigrants and refugees," she said. "throughout our history, we have welcomed refugees from all over the world, regardless of the few ignorant bigots who oppose immigration. We have that humanitarian element."

Hassan Jaber, the executive director of ACCESS, said the United States and Europe can do more to help refugees.

"The images we are getting are horrible," Jaber said. "Not only the child who died on the beach, the daily humiliation refugees are facing and the scale of this tragedy are heartbreaking."

He described the number of refugees to be admitted by the U.S. next year as "ridiculous." Jaber urged Arab Americans to put pressure on the administration to increase it.

"We can mobilize our community to add our voice to the humanitarian organizations across the country that are asking the government to more," he said.

"The research and the data and the facts are that immigrants and refugees have added to the U.S. economy four times what they have taken from it, especially in entrepreneurship," Jaber said in response to right-wing commentators who reject refugees.

Gov. Snyder welcomes refugees

Gov. Snyder said Tuesday that Michigan is in talks with the federal government and social services organizations to determine the number of refugees the state will accept.

"I don't want to overreact to say it's a certain number, or we're going to do this, but I think it's worth exploring and making sure we have a program and do that homework," Snyder told reporters in Lansing.

The governor added that by helping people, the state can create economic opportunities.

Snyder said asylum-seekers have been great business people, traditionally. "They were professionals, they were people that hire people, that tend to create jobs. And the evidence supports that."

According to a document sent to The Arab American News by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the state accepted 2,239 refugees the last fiscal year, including 1,146 from Iraq and only 75 from Syria.

Security concerns

Several ranking Republicans in Congress have expressed security concerns about admitting refugees. Presidential candidate Donald Trump said asylum-seekers could be ISIS members, pledging to send them back to Syria if elected.

Maya Berry, the executive director of The Arab American Institute, dismissed the claims. She said the United States already has an effective screening process for potential refugees.

Berry said refusing refugees under the premise that they could pose a threat to the United States is "intellectually dishonest."

Fewer than 2,500 Syrians had been granted asylum status in the United States by April.

Berry slammed the U.S. government for the low number of displaced Syrians it has accepted since the beginning of the war in 2011.

"It's absolutely shameful," she said. "Everybody talks about how complicated the situation in Syria is and it distracts from what we can do. Accepting refugees is something we can do."

Peters sends letter to Obama

After visiting the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, which houses close to 80,000 Syrians, last month, Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich) told The Arab American News that accepting just 10,000 refugees in a year is an "inadequate" number.

On Wednesday, Peters sent a letter to President Obama urging the United States to resettle at least 100,000 from Syria and Iraq, including displaced people from persecuted religious minorities, in the coming years. The senator advocated for accepting 30,000 refugees from the region in fiscal year 2016.

"The world has been moved by the plight of refugees who have undertaken life-threatening journeys to escape violence and persecution," the senator wrote. "Many of those seeking admission to the United States are members of ancient

peoples whose historical homeland has been ravaged by war and terror. These are people who would prefer to remain at home in peace, but are unfortunately compelled to flee in hopes of achieving basic security for their families."

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich) also urged the president to accept more people from Syria, in an interview with The Arab American News last month.

http://www.arabamericannews.com/news/news/id_11144/Community-organizations,-political-leaders-urge-U-S-to-accept-more-refugees.html

A Hole in the Safety Net Offered by the Affordable Care Act

Youth Today – October 2, 2015, By Ray Glier

Kayla VanDyke, 23, was on her way in a career as an advocate for foster youth in Oregon. She had a college degree in human physiology and she was working for Foster Club, an advocacy organization, counseling foster children who had traumatic experiences with sexual abuse and attachment issues. In and out of foster homes herself since she was 5 years old, VanDyke was looking at graduate schools in Oregon to strengthen her skills in child welfare and have more impact.

Instead, she had to return to her home state of Minnesota because of recurring health issues. The Affordable Care Act will cover foster youth who age out of foster care until they are 26 — unless they move into certain states. A provision in the Medicaid law allows Oregon to refuse health coverage to foster youth if they move in from out of state.

Just like that, VanDyke's dreams were hijacked. Only 13 states allow foster youth to travel into their state with their federal health insurance, an obvious hole in the safety net of ACA.

"The bureaucrats and government and the state, they all talk about wanting foster kids to succeed and make it on their own, and here I am, someone who graduated from college with good grades and with independent research, and I was on a path to graduate school — and here is this roadblock," VanDyke said. "I am doing things to be successful in the community and overcoming challenges and then, all of a sudden, a core support is being pulled out from under me. It didn't make a lot of sense."

When VanDyke's stomach and intestinal issues grew more severe this past spring, she had to give up the job and move back to Minnesota to seek health care.

According to Shadi Houshyar, the vice president of child welfare policy for First Focus, an advocacy organization that lobbies in Congress on issues involving children and families, the 13 states that allow foster youth to leave their home state and use their health insurance in another state are California, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia and Wisconsin.

So far, 37 states will not allow the Medicaid coverage to travel with former foster children. However, the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) said in a December 2013 memo to state Medicaid offices that it will approve any state that offers an amendment to its Medicaid policy covering people who were in foster care and getting Medicaid when they "aged out" in other states.

Section 2004 in the Affordable Care Act added a new mandatory group to the law: former foster care children. Former foster care children now had to be covered by health insurance under one section of the Affordable Care Act. Another section said states must cover people under age 26 who were both enrolled in Medicaid and in foster care under responsibility of the state when they turned 18 (or a higher age such as 21 in some states).

In a statement Dec. 13, 2013, CMS, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, interpreted the law to mean that states had the option to cover foster youth from another state, regardless of income.

[Related: The Maze of Foster Care and Health Care]

In a 2009 speech on the Senate floor, then-Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., the primary sponsor of the provision to allow foster youth to travel from state to state, said all eligible former foster youth should be covered.

The 400,000 foster youth in the nation are a highly transient population who seek jobs, education or long-lost family. Landrieu intended to secure a protection for them, said Tricia Brooks, a research assistant professor at the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute and senior fellow at the Center for Children and Families.

“The simple drafting error of using ‘the state’ versus ‘a state’ has been interpreted in the proposed rules to require states to cover youth who aged out in ‘the’ state, but make it an option to cover youth who aged out of foster care in ‘a’ different state,” Brooks said. “This is concerning because it is not uncommon for a child to be placed in foster care in another state, particularly in metropolitan areas that span multiple states. Moreover, former foster youth are often a transient population, and covering them regardless of their current residency is critical to assuring that they have continuing access to health care.”

Brooks said she and Georgetown colleague Sophia Duong are writing a brief for Congress to try to amend the law. They expect to file it in the fall.

In the meantime, Sen. Robert Casey, D-Pa., introduced a bill in Congress on July 23 called Health Insurance for Former Foster Youth Act of 2015. It seeks to ensure insurance continuity for foster youth who move to one of the 37 states that does not now permit Medicaid benefits to travel to that state.

“Why states aren’t picking up the option isn’t completely clear,” Brooks said. “I’m sure that some states simply want to avoid costs that are not mandated under Medicaid law. But I also think there is not widespread awareness of the issue.”

Brooks said CMS is taking another look at the issue to see if it has the statutory basis to require states to cover youth regardless of the state where they were in foster care.

A spokesperson for the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), the state’s Medicaid provider, said in an e-mail that Oregon’s decision was “part of a State Plan option that Oregon chose not to take. As with most State Plan options there are budgetary impacts that influence decisions.”

Walker Blevins, 20, was in foster care in Washington and Montana until she was 18. She lives in Niobrara, Neb., with her husband, Will. They are expecting a baby in September. When she aged out of foster care at 18, Walker expected to be covered by her own Medicaid. Nebraska said she was not.

“Nebraska cut me off from everything,” said Blevins, who was in foster care from age 15 to 18 in Montana. “They said if you are not staying in Montana, you don’t get anything. If you’re leaving Montana, you’re done. The only reason they gave me for their decision was that I moved and that I was only eligible for health care as a foster youth in Montana.”

Blevins said she had the same issue when she moved back to Washington state briefly to take care of a sick aunt. Because she had aged out of foster care in Montana when she was 18, Washington said she was ineligible for her Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. While she cared for her aunt, she had no health insurance.

When Blevins married and moved to Nebraska, she applied for Medicaid from the state of Nebraska because of her low income. That’s how she finally secured health care coverage, not through her rights as a former foster youth.

“At first it was frustrating,” Blevins said. “I had health care my senior year in high school, then it all crashed on me. I’ve picked myself up and learned how to handle these things on my own.”

<http://youthtoday.org/2015/10/a-hole-in-the-safety-net-offered-by-the-affordable-care-act/>

Program helps children who experienced trauma

Daily Tribune – October 2, 2015, By Jameson Cook

Laurel and Steve Smith adopted two Russian children when the children were very young. While the youths have progressed in their decade here, some of the effects of the trauma they endured hasn't been erased.

That's why the Smiths, who reside in Warren, took advantage of a new Easter Seals Michigan program that steers services to children who have experienced any type of trauma -- whether it's witnessing or being involved in a violent assault or more subtle, ongoing events such as lack of basic care.

The program, called Look, Uncover, Nurture, Act (LUNA) operated by Easter Seals, allows children 18 and younger and/or their parents to complete a free online screening to possibly receive an assessment that results in a treatment program. The screening can be found at lunamodel.org.

"Hopefully we will get recommendations for other therapy or things we can do to help them have a good life after we are long gone," Laurel Smith said. "I'm hoping we can learn to do things so they can feel better about themselves."

Uriel Stephens, director of family services of Easter Seals Michigan, said childhood trauma spawns emotional and intellectual issues.

"For children who have experienced early trauma, it can affect their brain development and learning capacity," Stephens said.

She said many of those youths develop attention deficit disorder and oppositional defiance disorder.

"A lot of children who experience trauma and live in a stressful environment develop that fight or flight behavior," she said.

According to Easter Seals Michigan, children who have experienced trauma are three times more likely to experience employment problems and suffer from depression, four times more likely to become an alcoholic and 15 times more likely to commit suicide.

About 270 children have qualified for the program statewide since it started last January, Stephens said.

The parents are responsible for paying for the treatment, though Stephens said virtually every child's treatment has been paid for with funds from private health insurance, Medicaid, state Department of Human Resources (for foster children) or county Community Mental Health.

The program is funded by a \$4.1 million grant awarded to Easter Seals by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to run the program for three years. The MHEF was created by a 2013 state law that, in part, requires Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to contribute up to \$1.56 billion over 18 years to the fund for health initiatives.

Eight assessment sights are located in Michigan -- in Center Line, Waterford, Detroit, the Upper Peninsula and Kent, Genesee, Kalamazoo and Isabella counties.

Laurel Smith, 53, and her husband, Steve, 50, placed their children -- Gabby, 13, and Duncan, 11 -- in therapy for five years, including speech therapy, and Gabby has taken growth hormones because she was undersized. But they believe more can be done and qualified for an assessment. They met with assessors Sept. 3 and were supposed to receive a treatment recommendations any time, Laurel Smith said early this week.

Smith said they adopted Gabby when she was 25 months old and Duncan when he was about 8 months old.

She said, "We don't know exactly what they went through" but know both spent time in an orphanage and hospitals as well as in private residences and were neglected.

She said she believes horse therapy would be good for Gabby.

Gabby's "hyper vigilance" and rigidity is a sign of post traumatic stress disorder, Smith said.

Gabby in Russia lived for a time with her mother in a small room shared by six people, Smith said. When she arrived here, she was 15 pounds, 27 inches, the size of a typical 4-month-old in the United States. With hormones help, she has grown to about 4 feet 11 inches tall and 80 pounds.

Both have food issues and "will eat anything" because they were not well-fed, Smith said, and Duncan likes his food cold.

Both have been affected by not being held or coddled by someone during infancy, Smith said.

Duncan had attention deficit disorder that developed into Asperger's syndrome, Smith said.

Smith said she is proud of the progress made by her children and optimistic about their future. Officials at their school, Carter Middle School, "have been wonderful" about accommodating them.

The children, who like Smith have Lithuanian heritage, know their roots and talk about wanting to contact their natural siblings overseas.

"These kids have a lot of strength," she said. "They have their quirks, but they are strong."

<http://www.dailytribune.com/health/20151002/program-helps-children-who-experienced-trauma>

Maine has found a stunning way to keep the poor in poverty

The Washington Post – October 1, 2015, By Roberto A. Ferdman

A savings account can be a powerful thing, especially for someone struggling to make ends meet. A little extra money on the side—even the tiniest of sums—can be a life-preserving cushion in the case of an unexpected injury, illness, or sudden unemployment. Building a financial base can also be a ticket out of poverty for families long relegated to economic hardship.

In Maine, though, the governor has fired up a debate about whether an individual can have a bit of money in the bank and still need governmental assistance. Starting as early as Nov. 1, Maine is going to limit the financial assets of welfare recipients, effectively discouraging them from saving money.

The state will place a \$5,000 cap on the savings and other assets of residents enrolled in the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Those whose bank accounts, secondary vehicles and homes, and other assets considered non-essential by the government, exceed the limit will no longer be eligible to participate in the food stamp program. An individual's primary home and vehicle won't count toward the limit.

The thinking, according to the Gov. Paul LePage's office, is simple: People shouldn't be allowed to take money from the government if they don't need to. "Most Mainers would agree that before someone receives taxpayer-funded welfare benefits, they should sell non-essential assets and use their savings," LePage said in a written statement.

"What people see, what they're concerned about these days, is the abuse of the welfare system," added David Sorensen, who is the director of media relations and policy research for Maine's Department of Health and Human Services. "Well, it's an abuse to enroll in the system when you've got \$5,000 in the bank."

But the unintended consequences of asset tests, like the one soon to be implemented in Maine, can be crippling, according to a growing pool of people who oppose such requirements. They argue that impoverished Americans, hoping to break from the cycle of poverty, are instead further bound by it. Many in Maine, struggling to make ends meet, will no longer put money aside, since doing so could jeopardize their ability to eat.

"There's a reason most states have moved away from asset tests," said Ezra Levin, who is the associate director of the Corporation for Enterprise Development, a nonprofit organization that fights poverty. Levin specializes in tax and asset-building policies, and is highly critical of LePage's plan. "The tests are counterproductive. They don't help people become self-sufficient. They actually do just the opposite."

Up until 1996, federal assistance programs were more preoccupied with providing indefinite income support than lifting families out of poverty. That year, President Clinton signed the 'Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,' which effectively flipped the goal around. But many quirks about the programs, including their reliance on asset tests, weren't reconsidered along with their central purpose.

Today, asset tests have become unpopular. Increasingly, they have been viewed as inhibitors to self-sufficiency—people need to build a safety net, in the form of savings or assets, before they can transition away from government aid.

Only a handful of states, including Michigan, Wyoming, and Virginia, still require that food stamp recipients pass such exams. The rest—36 in all—have chosen to drop them in recent years. Most recently, Pennsylvania shed the practice.

Levin is not alone in his disapproval of the Maine governor's plan. Amy Fried, who teaches political science at the University of Maine, penned an opinion piece for local newspaper Bangor Daily News on Tuesday, detailing how the policy will hurt low income students hoping to save for college. Rachel Black, who is a senior policy analyst for New America, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, told the Portland Press Herald last month that the legislation is "antithetical to the idea of promoting self-sufficiency."

Perhaps the most poignant criticism comes from an investigation published in 2013 by the Deseret News. The piece chronicles the struggles of Melissa and Jimmy, a couple living on food stamps. They saved money to ween themselves off of the program, but were forced off too soon, thanks to asset limits. They had no choice but to spend some of their savings so they could afford to eat.

"It felt like a no-win situation," Melissa told the Deseret News. "We were being forced to choose between what is good for our family in the long term and what our kids need right now."

Sorensen acknowledges that the forthcoming legislation has met ample disapproval. He says the governor's office expects the criticism to grow louder as the mechanics are implemented. But he believes the governor's plan is more careful than many realize.

"We're not penalizing anyone for having an IRA account or a 401K," he said. "We don't include personal items either, as some have people have suggested. The truth is that we're not actually being very strict about this."

Sorensen points to the fact that the USDA's default limit for bank accounts is \$2,250, less than half the cap that will be implemented in Maine, as evidence of the program's leniency (though the default limit is neither binding nor adhered to by many states anymore). He also notes that it only applies to people without dependents (i.e. children).

But that's less generous than it sounds, says Levin. "Just because someone doesn't have officially registered dependents doesn't mean there aren't people who depend on them," he said.

Currently, a household of one can earn no more than \$1,276 of gross income per month in order to receive food stamps. That same household can qualify for up to \$194 dollars a month, or fewer than \$7 dollars day, as part of SNAP, according

to the Department of Agriculture. It doesn't take much math to figure out that neither that kind of income nor the daily food allowance affords any kind of lavish lifestyle.

"If someone manages to save money while earning next to nothing, why would we punish them for it?" Levin said. "Why would we discourage sound financial practices?"

The number of welfare recipients has shot up in Maine in recent years, largely thanks to the recession, but there is little evidence to suggest there is rampant abuse of the system. Studies have, in fact, suggested that the opposite is true. Only a tiny fraction of welfare recipients have enough in their bank accounts to fail the sort of asset test soon to be implemented in Maine.

Gov. LePage's policy is part of what Levin calls a long history of complicating the plight of the poor in America. The problem, he says, is that there's so much focus on people who don't deserve support that the people who do are made to suffer.

"Normally it's Republicans who support programs that create incentives for poor people to save," Levin says. "The crux of conservative thinking around welfare is that people shouldn't grow dependent, but this policy does exactly that."

LePage says asset tests are necessary if his state is going to rein in a system he believes has grown too large for its own good. "What the governor is doing is breaking the cycle of generational dependency," Sorensen said. "Our goal here in Maine is to change the culture, and change the expectations of the system."

Janet Smith, a grassroots activist in Maine who helps impoverished communities with financial capability and asset building, sees only irony in that statement. "One of the few ways to break out of generational poverty is to build assets, to save money," she says. "The governor is effectively closing that window."

Poverty involves a complex web of sacrifices that policymakers aren't always privy to, she says. To demonstrate that disconnect, Smith tells the story of a man she once worked with, who couldn't afford to live on a street that was regularly plowed during the winters—which are long in Maine. Each day, he was forced to use a beat-up snowmobile to get from his home to his car, an unconventional but necessary step. From there he drove to work. And at day's end, the process repeated itself, in opposite order.

"I'm not saying SNAP recipients need snowmobiles," Smith says. "What I'm saying is that we're focusing on the wrong things."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/10/01/maines-governor-has-a-new-plan-to-keep-the-poor-in-poverty/>

Connections — for communities that care

Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards' – October 1, 2015

[Click here](#) for access to the Fall 2015 Issue of Connections as well as previous issues.

<https://www.macmhb.org/resources/connections>

Be aware of 'super' lice, resistant to treatment

The Daily Reporter – October 2, 2015, By Jennifer Coe-Harris

BRANCH COUNTY — It's every parent's worst nightmare. Your child gets sent home from school and reportedly has a case of head lice.

Parents need to know what steps to take if this happens and be aware of 'super lice' that are resistant to treatment and have hit 25 states in the U.S so far. At this point there have been no reported outbreaks of 'super lice' in Branch, Hillsdale or St Joseph counties, according to the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency.

This doesn't mean that it isn't in the local area, however so far no cases have been documented. No reports have been made as of yet from local schools either, but parents and students need to be aware that it could very possibly make its way to this area.

The Center for Disease Control has estimated that 6-12 million infestations occur each year in the U.S. Of these infestations among children ages 3 to 11, some studies suggest that girls get head lice more than boys. This is presumably because of more head-to-head contact, which is the most common way to contract head lice.

Head lice are tiny insects that feed on blood from the human scalp. Contrary to popular belief, head lice prefer clean hair, and a head lice infestation isn't a sign of poor personal hygiene or an unclean living environment.

Head lice does not have to be reported to the local health department, as it does not carry bacterial or viral infectious diseases. They are definitely a nuisance, but not considered a health hazard.

Head lice can be without symptoms, particularly if it's a new infestation, or when infestation is light. Itching is the most common symptom of head lice and is caused by an allergic reaction to louse bites. It may take up to four to six weeks for itching to appear the first time a person has head lice (CDC).

Head lice are most commonly spread by direct head-to-head contact, according to the CDC. They can also — but much less frequently — be spread by sharing clothing or belongings onto which lice have crawled or nits (lice eggs) have attached to shed hairs.

Head lice can only survive less than one to two weeks if they fall off a person but cannot feed. Nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the scalp. Head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and can't feed.

According to the Mayo Clinic, over-the-counter and prescription medications are available to treat head lice.

Head lice can reoccur, however, if the home isn't properly treated and cleaned, as well. You don't have to spend a lot of time and money on housecleaning though — just follow the CDC's simple steps to avoid re-infestation.

- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens and other items that the infested person wore or used. Use hot water. Clothing and items that cannot be washed can be dry-cleaned.
- If you do not choose to wash these items, seal them in a plastic bag and store for two weeks.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130 degrees fahrenheit) for 5 to 10 minutes
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person may have sat or laid down.
- Do not use fumigant sprays. They can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

A number of home or natural remedies can be used to treat head lice infestations, but so far, there is little to no clinical evidence of their effectiveness.

A common home remedy being talked about recently is to use tea tree oil. Many claimed to have used this in their shampoo or conditioner, or placed behind the ears or back of the neck, as a way to prevent lice infestation.

According to National Health Institutes, however, "The research community has not reached a consensus as to whether using tea tree oil for lice removal is effective. There is insufficient evidence to rate the tea tree oil's effectiveness for treating lice."

Other health experts say that there may be merit behind the idea that tree tea oil is a useful lice treatment, even though it is a claim that many believe to be a myth.

When it comes to home remedies, it should be noted that it is strongly recommended that people avoid using kerosene or other chemicals that are not safe, and are not intended for treating lice.

These are some important things to remember when treating head lice:

- Do not use extra amounts of lice medication unless instructed by a physician or pharmacist. These are insecticides and can be dangerous if they are misused or overused.
- All lice-treating medications should be kept out of the eyes. If any gets in the eyes, it should be immediately flushed away.
- Do not treat an infested person more than two to three times with the same medication. Try a different medicine, or contact your pharmacist or physician for advice.
- Do not use different head lice medicines at the same time, unless instructed to do so by your physician or pharmacist.
- Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner, before using lice medication. Do not re-wash hair for one to two days after the lice medicine is removed.

Additional guidelines for treatment that can be found on the CDC's website.

So what about that "super lice?" It has been reported that many over-the-counter lice kits aren't killing the bugs anymore, because lice have developed resistance to the active ingredients (pyrethroids).

"Lice as a species have been exposed to these medications, so they naturally develop a resistance," Dr. Corinn Cross, spokesperson for the American Academy of Pediatrics, said.

These are what come to be known as super lice

A recent study by researchers has found that of head lice samples tested from 30 states, it was found that 104 out of the 109 samples that were tested had high levels of gene mutations, which have been linked to resistance to pyrethroids. Out of the 30 states that were surveyed, Michigan was the only one that did not appear to have lice with the mutation.

For truly resistant lice, the second line of defense could be one of the new, stronger, prescription-only medications, according to the CDC. However these contain strong chemicals and should be a last resort.

<http://www.thedailyreporter.com/article/20151002/NEWS/151009853>

Public health emergency declared due to lead in Flint water

KATV – October 2, 2015, By Corey Williams, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) - Officials in Michigan declared a public health emergency Thursday over the city of Flint's water, after months of resident complaints about its smell and taste, in response to tests that showed children with elevated levels of lead.

A day after Gov. Rick Snyder said the consequences of using the Flint River for the city's drinking water weren't "fully understood," Genesee County Commissioners recommended that people not use the water unless it first goes through an approved filter at taps.

A group of doctors called a news conference last week to report high levels of lead in blood samples from children, as the corrosive water is apparently releasing lead from old pipes in homes. It was among the most significant challenges to the quality of Flint water since the city decided last year to stop paying Detroit for its water service.

Mayor Dayne Walling said Thursday residents should follow the county commission's declaration on using filters certified for lead removal, having water tested and flushing cold water for five minutes before drinking it.

A coalition of local citizens and national groups petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday to order Michigan and state environmental officials to reconnect Flint to Detroit water.

"As evidenced by the ongoing poisoning of the children of Flint, it's time for the EPA to take immediate action to provide us with a safe water source," said LeeAnne Walters, a Flint parent and member of the Water You Fighting For group.

Detroit's water system serves about 4 million people in communities across southeastern Michigan.

"This department is always willing to explore possibilities that may be beneficial ... for the residents of Flint and the other communities that we serve," William Wolfson of the Detroit Water Department told The Associated Press.

Flint is among a number of communities that have complained about the rising cost of Detroit's water and sewerage service. City officials estimated the cost of buying water from Detroit at \$16 million. They turned off Flint's tap to Detroit water in April 2014 and opted for Flint River water until the city switches to a new pipeline from Lake Huron. The overall annual cost to be part of the Lake Huron system would be \$12.5 million.

The decision to break away from the Detroit system was made while a Snyder-appointed emergency manager was running the long-struggling city, which had reached a financial crisis.

"In terms of a mistake, what I would say is we found there are probably things that weren't as fully understood when that switch was made," Snyder said Wednesday.

But residents have been unhappy with the taste and appearance of water from the Flint River. They also have raised health concerns, reporting rashes, hair loss and other problems. A General Motors plant stopped using the water, saying it was rusting its parts.

Despite the complaints, city officials had said state tests showed the water met federal safety guidelines.

More concerns surfaced after Virginia Tech researchers posted an online report in early September saying Flint's water is "creating a public health threat" in old homes that have lead pipes or pipes fused with lead solder. Flint officials say they know which homes have risky pipes but the information is on about 45,000 index cards and difficult to retrieve.

The city is now telling residents to use only cold water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula, and recommending they use the certified filters. The General Motors Foundation, the local United Way and others have given at least \$105,000 to buy filters for 5,000 residents.

But Kary Moss, director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan - one of the group's filing the petition with the EPA - says the first step has to be removing the Flint River as the city's source of water.

<http://www.katv.com/story/30168516/public-health-emergency-declared-due-to-lead-in-flint-water>

Don't drink Flint's water, Genesee County leaders warn

MLive – October 1, 2015, By Jaquanda Johnson

GENESEE COUNTY, MI — Don't drink the water. That's one message Genesee County officials are pushing to residents who get their water supply from the city of Flint.

Genesee County Commissioners Brenda Clack, Jamie Curtis and Bryant Nolden, along with Genesee County Health Officer Mark Valacak, held a news conference Thursday, Oct. 1, urging residents to not drink the city's water until it is checked for lead or they have installed an approved water filter.

The commissioners declared a public health emergency and said they are hoping their declaration will move Gov. Rick Snyder to declare a state of emergency to handle Flint's water crisis.

"This falls directly on the doorstep of the governor," said Nolden. "If we look at what happened with going to the Flint River, this falls smack-dab on the emergency manager and the governor. Now, I think it's imperative that the state step up and help us fix this problem. We're just imploring that the state actively engage and look at ways we can connect to the Detroit River. ... This is a major health situation for this entire community."

Flint Mayor Dayne Walling issued a statement on the commissioners' declaration, saying Flint water customers should filter their water before drinking it.

Commissioners said they have issued various communications with Snyder's office but still haven't heard any word from the governor about the state's plans.

"Flint residents need safe, clean water, and they need accurate information about their health and their homes," said David Murray, Snyder's deputy press secretary, in a statement issued Thursday. "Gov. Snyder has an action plan that builds on existing efforts to help Flint city leaders and their residents. ... It addresses short- and long-term challenges and will keep city residents safe."

A batch of water filters is expected to arrive in the city sometime Friday, Oct. 2. The filters came from the combined efforts of the United Way, city of Flint, General Motors Foundation and a donation from the Making Our Children Smile Foundation. In total, \$105,000 was donated to purchase 5,250 water filters — costing about \$20 each — for Flint residents.

Valacak said he is hoping officials can start distributing the water filters as early as Friday afternoon, but they are going to focus on high-risk residents, including pregnant women and homes with children.

The county has partnered with the United Way and other community organizations, such as the University of Michigan-Flint, to help distribute the water filters. Valacak said they are looking to have details on distribution as soon as Friday morning, and updates can be found on the Health Department's website.

In addition, the Flint Department of Public Works is offering free water testing for Flint residents.

There are potentially 45,000 homes in the city that may have issues with lead. Clack, Curtis and Nolden represent the majority of the city on the county board. Nolden said his district is primarily in older areas of the city, where the infrastructure is older and residents may be at high risk for lead exposure.

On Tuesday, Sept. 29, the county issued an advisory warning the community of various health hazards associated with lead, including brain damage, stunted growth and hearing problems in children. Valacak said pregnant women and children 5 and younger are especially vulnerable.

Commissioners said they have reached out to Snyder in hopes of him declaring a state of emergency for the city but have not heard back from his office and also said his anonymous donation of 1,500 water filters nearly a month ago shows the governor's office knows there is a problem with Flint's water.

"To me, that's an admission of guilt," Curtis said. "You know there's a problem. ... We're not looking for anybody to point fingers and put the blame. ... We have lead in our water. Let's fix the problem."

http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/10/genesee_county_leaders_warn_do.html

Grand Traverse County Child Abuse Trial Enters Second Day of Testimony

9 & 10 News – October 1, 2015, By Brittany Wright

Witnesses taking the stand in an ongoing child abuse trial in Grand Traverse County.

A man is accused of putting a toddler in a clothes dryer and turning it on.

Dustin Holdaway is charged with torture and first degree child abuse.

In March a 21-month old and his mother were staying at Holdaway's house.

In the morning, the mother reported her son had bruises and burns all over his body.

On Thursday, a fire investigator, the toddler's pediatrician and a state police trooper testified.

The prosecution brought in the dryer that was in Holdaway's house at the time of the incident.

The fire investigator explained how the boy's burns could have been caused by the dryer.

The trooper who first investigated the case says at first he thought the injuries on the boy were from his bath water being too hot, but later learned the dryer could have caused them.

"I went right for the dryer and opened it up. As soon as I opened it and saw the back of the drum with the holes and the pattern... I was immediately convinced that this is the mechanism of injury," said Trooper Michael Lorenzo, Michigan State Police.

Holdaway and a doctor from DeVos Children's Hospital are expected to testify on Friday.

<http://www.9and10news.com/story/30166707/grand-traverse-county-child-abuse-trial-enters-second-day-of-testimony>

Confidential student tip line is saving lives, Attorney General says

MLive – October 1, 2015, By Monica Scott

ROCKFORD, MI – Students and adults were moved to tears Thursday, Oct. 1, at North Rockford Middle School by a video chronicling the suicides of seven Michigan teens who were bullied for everything from their appearance to their sexual orientation.

The presentation was made during Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette's visit to discuss Michigan's school safety initiative - [OK2SAY](#).

The 24-hour confidential tip line is used by kids to report anything that threatens their safety - or that of others - via phone, text, email, mobile app, or website submission. Launched last year, the Michigan State Police has received more than 1,400 tips - more than half for bullying or cyberbullying.

"The video really hit me because I didn't know all the stats about suicide and it is really emotional," said Micah Merren, 13, an eighth-grader at North Rockford. "I was really focused in on everything and looking around the room wondering if this (bullying) was actually happening to someone."

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 10 and 19 in Michigan.

Tate Wierda, 13, said learning the stories behind the people who were bullied to the point of suicide is really sad. He thinks the presentation would probably help compel some students to use the tip line.

Schuetz told the approximately 950 students that he wants to create a new culture of responsibility, not silence. He said the program is saving lives.

"OK2SAY is all about you," he said. "We want to make sure schools are places of learning, not violence. OK2SAY is Michigan's way of putting in place a 24/7, 365 early warning system to try to stop violence in school before it occurs."

The tip line is manned by the Michigan State Police. Once a tip is received, a technician forwards it to the appropriate local agency or school, including law enforcement, Child Protective Services or mental health groups such as network 180.

During the OK2SAY presentation, students were urged to think about their own behavior and be willing to stand up and do the right thing. They were told that nine out of 10 students say they have witnessed cyberbullying, and one in four have been targeted. Students were also warned about predators on the Internet with another video.

Roughly 10 percent of the more than 1,400 tips in the past 12-plus months came from West Michigan's 14-county region, according to MSP Inspector Matt Bolger.

He said oftentimes, the number of tips coming from an area directly correlate to whether the schools have had presentations such as Thursday's, or market the program. He said if they are getting tips from an area, he believes it is because teens in that area are being proactive and that is a good thing.

The state Legislature approved a four-year, \$4 million appropriation to implement the initiative in 2013. Schuetz is now lobbying lawmakers to remove the sunset for the program so it can continue beyond the 2017-18 fiscal year.

He told MLive and The Grand Rapids Press on Thursday he is very confident the program will continue because of the broad support.

In a letter this summer to Gov. Rick Snyder and the Legislature, Schuetz said the program was restoring hope and saving lives. He recently has been making presentations in schools across the state.

"Once you have reviewed the annual report, I believe you will agree that it is critical for our kids that we remain vigilant in our commitment to OK2SAY for years to come," he wrote.

Between Sept. 1 and Dec. 31 last year, there were over 600 verified tips, representing 410 unique incidents including: 231 tips on bullying and cyberbullying, 74 threats of suicide, and 10 tips on child abuse.

Patrick Jackson, a senior at Rockford High School and a member of the school's Beyond The Rock production team, created a public service announcement for OK2SAY. The Attorney General's Office says it will begin running on the radio next week and will be posted on their website.

How to submit information:

- Calling the 1-855 hotline number
- Sending emails and multi-media attachments to ok2say@mi.gov
- Texting through Short Message Service (160 characters)
- Completing the tip submission form found on the OK2SAY website, www.mi.gov/ok2say
- Sending tips via the OK2SAY mobile app, including multi-media attachments

"Rockford is committed to providing a safe and orderly environment for our students," said Superintendent Michael Shibler, who spoke about their Developing Healthy Kids campaign to support their 8,000 students, training a group of Peer Listeners and enhancing security at all schools.

Shibler said the OK2SAY is another safety measure and age appropriate presentations would be made at every school building.

Lissa Weidenfeller, principal of North Rockford Middle School, said her teachers reported having some powerful conversations with students following the OK2SAY presentation. She said each of the teachers received a packet prior to the event on how to follow-up with their students.

The idea for OK2SAY came from Joanne Spry, an assistant superintendent at Cedar Springs Public Schools, who contacted Schuette in 2013 while she was superintendent of Cadillac Schools. Her call followed the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in December 2012.

http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2015/10/confidential_student_tip_line.html

Documents: Mom, child miles away when grandmother shot father

Morning Sun – October 1, 2015, By Rick Mills

Lawrence Howard drove to Mt. Pleasant to pick up his daughter on the day he was killed, not knowing the toddler and her mother were some 90 miles away while the child's grandmother waited to shoot him, court records indicate.

State officials are trying to take the child from her mother's care for allegedly fabricated allegations of sexual abuse and evidence that she and the child were in another county while Howard tried to pick up the child on the day he was shot, among other things.

An intense flurry of text messages and phone calls show that Latesha Bigford and possibly others likely knew her mother was going to meet the child's father when he showed up at Chase Run Apartments shortly after noon last April 18.

Howard told Latesha Bigford "I'm here" from the apartment's parking lot, a message she received that very minute, according to court documents seeking to remove the couple's child from her mother's care.

Mary Bigford, mother of Latesha and grandmother of the 4-year-old, shot and killed Howard eight minutes later, police, prosecutors, protective service workers and witnesses said.

Meanwhile, Pamela Farris, Mary Bigford's sister – who refused to testify in court earlier this week invoking her right against self-incrimination – had inquired by text message two hours before the killing as to what time "he" was supposed to pick up "her," to which Bigford replied, "coming soon."

Farris later – but months before she took the Fifth Amendment in court this week – refused to talk to police, saying she had an attorney.

Those are among facts outlined by Child Protective Services workers in a petition seeking to remove the child from her mother's custody.

Efforts to remove the child from her mother's custody have been ongoing for months, court records indicate.

Although Latesha Bigford's whereabouts were initially not known after the murder, Farris testified Thursday that the two at times stay with her.

But a website in support of Latesha Bigford says the child was taken from her in Florida by Michigan protective services workers and has been in foster care for some time, with Latisha seeing her three hours a week.

While Mary Bigford was in court Thursday on murder charges, Latesha is scheduled for a pre-trial hearing on Friday in the effort to remove custody, in Judge William Ervin's courtroom.

No evidence was found in two separate investigations that Howard was abusing his daughter, but medical experts were alarmed by several things involving Latesha, including that she continued to allow the child to suckle at her breast despite having been weaned some time ago.

"Children can be breast fed for prolonged periods of time, but if oral/breast contact is done without the provision of feeding, this is not feeding," said Dr. Debra Sims, a child abuse pediatric specialist at DeVos Childrens Hospital in Grand Rapids. "I would suggest a psychological evaluation of the mom and child, and do not think this is healthy behavior."

Statements that Latesha is in fact still breast-feeding are also on the website supporting her, but the site also says "any statements or assertions on this website are not direct quotes or statements from any party related to this case."

Concerns about Latesha's own behavior are interspersed throughout the report with the repeated allegations by mother and grandmother to law enforcement and protective services workers that the child was being abused.

Multiple medical and psychological examinations, however, did not point to any abuse by Howard, the reports indicate.

Ironically, Latesha Bigford cancelled her last appointment with a detective minutes after talking to her own mother, later accused of murder, on the day before the killing.

Latesha had an appointment to talk about sexual abuse allegations with a Fenton police detective on the morning of April 17, but cancelled it at 7:08 a.m. – just 22 minutes after talking with her mother, and some 28 hours before the murder.

On the next day, officials say Latesha Bigford and the child were hidden away at a Barry County relative's home in southwest Michigan while her mother drove to Mt. Pleasant with a handgun, according to the court documents.

Further evidence supporting removal of custody indicates that Latesha and the child had often stayed with Mary Bigford at her Gilmore Township home that was littered with pornographic magazines, IV needles within reach of a child, potting soil strewn across the kitchen floor, clutter preventing movement to bedrooms and chickens or geese wandering inside and un-caged.

Last month's hearing and Friday's conference seeking to remove the child from Latesha Bigford's care comes after months of hearings and testimony in the case.

Isabella County Judge Mark Duthie, in fact, ordered Latesha Bigford to produce the child back in May, but neither showed up.

At that time, efforts to find Latesha and the child had been made through relatives and her attorney, records indicate.

State experts said the child "is at substantial risk of harm" in her mother's care.

<http://www.themorningsun.com/general-news/20151001/documents-mom-child-miles-away-when-grandmother-shot-father>
