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From: Laura Mebert [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 16, 2016 1:07 AM
To: MDCRDirector [REDACTED]
Subject: Flint Water Crisis Testimony

For the Commission's consideration:

I am writing to address "race, class, or wealth and its relationship to the water contamination crisis."

Flint was under Emergency Management at the time the switch was made to corrosive Flint River drinking water. The right to vote is one of our most treasured civil liberties. The Commission should investigate whether the Emergency Manager law was either *designed* to disproportionately take away, or in practice had the actual *effect* of taking away, the civil rights of majority African-American municipalities with high rates of poverty.

The Commission should consider that the Flint financial crisis that was the pretext for placing it under Emergency Manager control in the first place, was a crisis manufactured by Lansing. The legislature first manufactured it through their decision to divert revenue-sharing funds from local communities to fill holes in state budget, and subsequently, Gov. Snyder turned this practice into official policy through his EVIP program. See the following for more information: http://www.mlive.com/lansing-news/index.ssf/2014/03/michigan_revenue_sharing_strug.html The legislature and the Snyder administration used these cuts to revenue sharing to advance their own priorities and ideological agendas. At the time, they appeared wholly untroubled by any consideration of what Michigan's poorest communities might suffer as a result. (Remorse did not begin to roll in until after the water crisis hit the news, and even then, Lansing did not show remorse for the foundational role that cuts to revenue sharing played in producing this crisis). Whether caused by malice or willful negligence, this is the very root of the Flint Water Crisis: state politicians not caring about the fate of Michigan's poorer communities. This is discrimination based on class and wealth.

The Emergency Manager's decision to switch Flint's drinking water to water from the corrosive Flint River was made by State-empowered actors without local citizens or their elected officials having any genuine say in the decision. The decision was a purely financial one: the mission of the Emergency Manager was not to protect the lives, health, and well-being of people in Flint, but to cut the budget so that Snyder might claim success. Flint residents had been stripped of the civil right to choose their leaders and govern their own affairs, and their lives did not matter enough to the decision-makers that Lansing appointed to make decisions on their behalf. This is truly unforgivable, as the health of a community should never come second to the task of making numbers look good on paper, or to an ideological experiment, or to the ego-driven task of creating a positive image for the governor's EVIP program. This is discrimination based on race, class, and wealth if ever such discrimination existed.

Sincerely,
Laura Mebert
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