



Coalition *for* Healthier Schools

...providing the national platform and
the forum for environmental health at school, since 2001...

Coordinated by Healthy Schools Network

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NEW REPORT: UNJUST ENVIRONMENTAL BURDEN ON CHILDREN COALITION URGES HELP FOR SCHOOL KIDS, SCHOOLHOUSE REFORMS

(Washington, DC, February 5, 2013) - Leaders of the national Coalition for Healthier Schools today presented a new national report, *Towards Healthy Schools 2015*, to the Obama Administration and Congress. The state by state data and policy report and analysis says “all school children should be considered at elevated risk of health and learning difficulties due solely to the unexamined and or unaddressed risks in their schools and the lack of public health services for children...” Also released was a letter to Congress signed by more than 75 organizations calling for funding US EPA’s children’s health and schools-related voluntary programs.

Said **John Shaw, Healthy Schools Network Board President**, “There are signs of progress since we began these national reports in 2006, but the Administration and Congress must move more quickly to address risks to children. We can bend the health care cost curve and improve our children’s achievement.” Added **Board Member Lloyd Kolbe, PhD, a former CDC official**, “This is America’s largest unaddressed environmental health crisis for children.”

Said **Charlotte Collins, VP, Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America**, “Unhealthy school conditions put children in harm’s way, force parents to take time off from work, and cost the nation untold millions in health care costs. This is a justice and equity problem that must be fixed”.

Commented **Massachusetts Committee on Occupational Safety and Health’s Tolle Graham** who directs its healthy schools initiative, “States and local school districts still have a long way to go to address the health effects of poorly maintained schools. We need our school staff unions and associations, asthma coalitions and parents to continue to act in their own states to expand upon other states’ successful guidance protocols and regulations for “green and healthy” school environments such as requiring the use of 3rd party certified green cleaning products and integrating indoor environmental quality into school policies and procedures”.

Said **Jay Snyder, Association of School Business Officials – International**, “ASBO International has trained countless school business officials on indoor air and indoor environmental quality. Our members are mindful that children spend most of their week in school buildings. We urge the agencies to coordinate their plans and funds accordingly to ensure that funds are available for pressing environmental issues that affect school district employees and students.”

Offered **Claire Barnett**, Healthy Schools Network’s Executive and Coalition coordinator, whose office developed the new report, “Children are our priority. Environmental problems like indoor pollution, PCBs, molds, and toxic chemicals, are absolute barriers to attendance and learning. They can undermine the aspirations of even the best parents. It is an unjust burden on children to endure months or years of poor conditions without any relief.”

ALL CHILDREN CONSIDERED AT RISK OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Towards Healthy Schools 2015 cites multiple studies documenting the benefits of healthy indoor learning environments on attendance and achievement, then presents state-level data and policy summaries. A detailed narrative notes progress at US EPA and the Department of Education in encouraging states, but also urges swifter actions by federal and state agencies. See the full report at www.healthyschools.org/HealthySchools2015.pdf

There are more public schools buildings in the U.S., more children enrolled, more children with health and learning problems, but fewer children receiving special education than there were in 2006. But eleven states have adopted policies on the use of green cleaning products that can help reduce asthma. Twenty four states promote high performance and/or green school design standards. Yet, in this fiscal climate some states have significantly decreased or even suspended funds for construction, and schools may have trimmed nursing and custodial staff.

The report urges that federal-state partnerships to reform conditions of schools be expanded. It also urges new preventive public health services for children, which according to pediatrician Jerome Paulson, MD, Children’s National Medical Center, Washington, DC, are “woefully inadequate”.



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LETTER TO CONGRESS: CHILDREN ARE 100% OF OUR FUTURE

A Coalition letter to Congress was also released, urging full funding for US EPA's Office of Children's Health and the agency's Indoor Air Quality and other schools-related voluntary programs. Citing the need for a "just and equitable" approach to the federal budget, the letter notes that "children are 100% of our future. But because children do not vote, it all too often means that the needs of children are easily dismissed or put aside for later deliberation." See the letter at: <http://bit.ly/VxzbEm>

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

Molly Rauch, with **Moms Clean Air Force**, said, "Children need clean air to learn, grow, and thrive. With our children spending seven or more hours a day in school facilities, it is so important that schools work toward clean air. Moms and dads want clean air in schools every day, for the sake of our kids."

National Association of School Nurses President Linda Davis-Alldritt said, "NASN accepts and acts on the inextricable link between children's health and academic success. School nurses know that every child must have the opportunity to be successful and to learn in a healthy and safe school environment. Our future as a nation depends on it. States and school districts must make this a priority by investing in common-sense measures that address children's health as it relates to environmental conditions in schools."

National Education Association's Healthy Schools Caucus Chair Carolyn Smith-Evans added, "Our Caucus was formed in 2001 precisely to support our Union's efforts to help its members with environmental health issues on the job. We need federal support for state agencies along with good guidance. EPA's *LAQ Tools for Schools* annual Symposium used to provide much needed assistance to our schools in creating healthy working and learning environments. Teachers, educational support personnel, and students from coast to coast were helped to better health and safer, more productive school environments. The program was recently defunded."

The Coalition for Healthier Schools is coordinated by Healthy Schools Network, a not for profit and the leading voice for children's environmental health in schools. The Coalition held its eighth annual meeting in Washington, DC in January 2013, attended by fifty-four leaders from 36 state and national organizations, and from two federal agencies. Its members include environment, health, parent, environmental justice, and education groups and advocates nationally and in the states. Coalition members have shaped and won two federal laws and funds for school repairs and are active in advancing state reforms. For more information, see www.healthyschools.org/coalition.html.

To add your group's support to the letter to Congress, sign on at: <http://bit.ly/11anTIB>