



CALL FOR CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE: SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH *Caring for Our Future – 61 Million Children in School and Child Care*

February 2017

Federal Children's Initiative: Environmental Health at School will recognize children's unique vulnerability to environmental health hazards, reduce environmental risks in crumbling and badly maintained PK-12 schools, generate benefits for all children, save taxpayer money, and provide local jobs in thousands of communities across the country.

The Initiative addresses INFRASTRUCTURE and CHILDREN'S HEALTH

1. Fund Facility Infrastructure and Transportation: Any federal infrastructure bill must address the dire need for environmental improvements to existing public PK-12 schools and child care facilities, resulting in buildings which are built, renovated, and operated to promote children's health and learning, and to be resilient to severe storms. Targeted actions and investments, with a priority on low-wealth schools, must address eliminating lead, asbestos, radon, and PCBs; reducing indoor dampness; conducting energy retrofits for heating, ventilation, and lighting systems; and ensuring less polluting school vehicles and safe routes to school.

2. Establish Public Health Services for Children at Risk or with Environmental Exposures: Federal-state environmental health services to help children at risk or with exposures in schools/child care can be achieved by scaling up existing voluntary CDC, EPA, and NIEHS programs, research, and grants. These can provide public health services (tracking, interventions, reporting, and education) of children in partnership with city and state health agencies and with pediatric environmental health experts nationwide.

The Federal Initiative should be led by HHS/CDC and EPA, advised by ED, and an appointed advisory committee composed of representatives of children's environmental health, child health, school facility, and environment NGOs, parents, and education leaders. Federal leaders must include CDC's National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and NIOSH; EPA's Indoor Environments Division and its Office of Children's Health; and Transportation's Safe Routes to School, as well as appropriate child care offices. The Children's Initiative must include funds for convening annual symposia attended by schools, agencies, advisers, and grantees, and funding for the Education Facilities Clearinghouse.

Providence (RI) Journal, 2015

Cedar Rapids, IA, KCRG/New, 2015

J Roseman, H&S Consultant to AFT



Evidence: Healthy learning places help children learn and stay healthy. Public health is what society does to ensure the conditions for people to be healthy. There are increasing numbers of high-risk learners who are poor or minority children—or have asthma, other chronic illnesses, or special learning issues—in schools and in child care, facing hazards common in schools, such as lead, pesticides, and poor indoor air in dark, dirty, damp buildings. **US EPA:** Good ventilation reduces absences, improves staff productivity, and boosts test scores, such as 14-15% higher scores on standardized tests than in other classrooms, see <http://tinyurl.com/hsuov4l>. **National Research Council:** Schools that are clean, dry, and quiet; control dusts and particulates; and have good indoor air promote attendance and achievement, see <http://tinyurl.com/zmamzmb>. **IOM:** There is sufficient evidence to prevent environmental exposures in indoor environments, see <http://tinyurl.com/j5kzuhe>.

John Musso, Executive Director
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Reston, VA

“ASBO International urges Congress to launch an initiative that funds school infrastructure projects and promotes healthy learning environments for all students. We encourage the initiative to have an advisory committee that includes all K–12 stakeholders at the table, including school business officials, to ensure school districts have the sufficient funding and support they need to make this initiative a success.”



Jerome Paulson, MD, FAAP, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Environmental and Occupational Health, *George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences and Milken Institute School of Public Health, Washington, DC**

“Environmental health threats in child care centers and in PK-12 schools compromise children’s health and learning, yet there is no federal, state, or local agency that is funded and staffed to protect children in these settings from environmental health hazards.”



Portland, OR: water fountain closed due to lead, 2016, photo by parent



EPA/5: school chemical storage hazards.



Carbon dioxide in classroom: adult critical thinking declines at 1,000 ppm CO2

Background on Recommendations: The reports below, collaboratively developed by scores of state and national NGOs, recommend ripe opportunities to scale up existing agency programs to deliver effective infrastructure and public health programs benefiting children’s health and ability to learn.

- *Towards Healthy Schools: Reducing Risks to Children*, the 4th triennial national report from Healthy Schools Network, profiles successes and challenges in the states and finds all children at risk of exposures, see <http://tinyurl.com/hn4g84b>.
- *Blueprint for Protecting Children’s Environmental Health: An Urgent Call to Action*, from the Children’s Environmental Health Network, calls for children-first in all policy making, see <http://tinyurl.com/hpzyft>.
- *Environmental Health at School* conferences in 2015-16, led by Healthy Schools Network, engaged 76 senior staff from CDC, EPA, NIOSH, pediatric environmental health experts, and advocates from 46 different organizations, see <http://tinyurl.com/jozgrot>.
- *Reducing Environmental Exposures in Child Care*, Environmental Law Institute, 2011, see <http://tinyurl.com/zg5y9es>.

Add your support here: <http://www.goo.gl/T85Ir0>
 Information contact: info at healthyschools dot org

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

*Organizational affiliations given for information purposes only.

Claire L. Barnett, MBA, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network, Albany, NY

“What adult would not want a clean, dry, and quiet workplace with good indoor air and lighting? Unfortunately, too many schools have ignored these factors, then everyone suffers - the children, the taxpayers, the staff, and the facility as a community asset. We need a real priority on children.”

Judy Braiman, President, Empire State Consumer Project, Rochester, NY

“We do not want any existing protections taken away. Children need to be educated in a safe and healthy environment.”

Stacey Chacker, Asthma Regional Council of New England, Boston, MA

“Asthma is a leading chronic illness among children and teens in the U.S., and is a major reason why kids miss school. Chronic absenteeism contributes to delays in learning – such as not reading at grade level by the third grade, which in turn is an indicator for long-term health. Our schools – particularly those in our urban communities – need investments in their infrastructure to make them healthy places to learn and to prosper for all our nation’s children. We urge our President-elect to invest in America’s future – our youth!”

Sally Darney, MAT, PhD, Cary, NC

“As a parent and life-long health scientist I support these recommendations for optimizing healthy environments for children as we undertake infrastructure improvements.”

Dr. David Dyjack, Executive Director, National Environmental Health Association, Denver, CO

“Environmental Health Professionals work hard every day to make the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the homes we live in safe and secure.”

Margaret Frericks, Improving Kids’ Environments, Indianapolis, IN

“Indiana has a new law: schools must prevent idling, limit asthma triggers, and repair water damages. The state health agency can also investigate”

Julie Gast, PhD, Utah State University*, Logan, UT

“As the chair of the School Health Education and Services section of the American Public Health Association, I support funding to ensure schools are creating healthy and safe schools for our youth.”

Katie A Gallagher, University of Massachusetts*, Holyoke, MA

“The cleanliness and health of a facility has a direct impact on student learning. Support environmental health strategies like no idling laws, working HVAC systems, and updated drinking water plumbing for public school facilities and directly impact the future of our youth.”

Deirdre Imus, President & Founder, The Deirdre Imus Environmental Health Center®, Hackensack-Meridian, Hackensack, NJ

"Schools should be safe, nurturing environments that foster health and well-being - not threaten it. Reducing chemical exposures in schools is long overdue, and will not only improve academic performance, but will help kids feel better in and out of the classroom, now and in the future."

Shelley Kramer, Cancer Prevention Coalition for Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

“I have been involved with healthy schools, healthy products and information for consumers on avoidable risks of illness and cancer from environmental toxins for the past 23 years. I support this initiative.”

Daniela Kunz, Parents For Student Safety, Franklin, TN

“There must be requirements and a national standard for safer, healthier schools....”

Jerry Lamping, Take Care of Your Classroom Air (TCYCA), Boerne, TX

“Clean Air is required in factories for the making of computers, electronics, drugs, food and beverages. Clean air must also be required in classrooms for the development of young human beings. Unclean air affects lungs, hearts, the nervous system, blood vessels and brains especially during their development.”

Kathleen McCabe, Health Resources in Action, Boston, MA / Tamaki West, Massachusetts Asthma Action Partnership, Boston, MA

“Uncontrolled asthma can result in school absenteeism and missed work for a parent of a child with asthma. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism nationwide. In Massachusetts more than one in three children with current asthma missed school or daycare because of their asthma at least once a year. We call on the President-elect to invest in the infrastructure of our nation's public schools, as well as scaling up existing federal programs that are proven to work.”

Robin Organ, Executive Director, Green Schools, Mansfield, MA/National

“Help us develop the next generation of environmental leaders who understand the importance of having healthy bodies, a healthy environment, and a healthy and robust workforce. We thank you for championing such a vital cause, and are happy to support you in this endeavor and others around protecting our children and our future.”

Jerome Paulson, MD, FAAP, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Environmental and Occupational Health, George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences and Milken Institute School of Public Health*, Washington, DC

“Environmental health threats in child care centers and in PK-12 schools compromise children’s health and learning, yet there is no federal, state, or local agency that is funded and staffed to protect children in these settings from environmental health hazards.”

Leslie Rubin, MD, Developmental Pediatric Specialists, Atlanta, Georgia

“Improving the health of children through preventing exposure to adverse environmental factors improves their chances to be healthy successful adults and to contribute positively to society - as a corollary failure to do so will inevitably increase the costs to society in the future...”

John Schlitt, School Based Health Alliance, Washington, DC

“How can we expect our children to thrive in sick schools? We can do better to systematically remedy the toxic environments where young people learn, play, and grow.”

Anne Turner-Henson, PhD, RN, FAAN, UAB School of Nursing*, Birmingham, AL

“Frederick Douglas stated it is easier to build strong children than repair broken men. For U.S. schools to be GREAT, we need school environments with healthy indoor air quality, dry buildings, free from toxic chemicals, thermal comfort, clean, quiet and well maintained environments. Healthy school environments promote quality education and support learning.”

ORGANIZATIONS

21st Century School Fund,
Washington, D.C.

Advocates for Children of New York,
New York, NY

American School Health Association,
McLean, VA

Association of School Business Officials
International (ASBO), Reston, VA

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America,
Landover, MD

Asthma Regional Council of New England,
Boston, MA

Breast Cancer Fund, San Francisco, CA

Cancer Prevention Coalition for Los
Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Child Care Aware of America,
Arlington, VA

Children's Environmental Health Network,
Washington, D.C.

Collaborative for High Performance
Schools, Sacramento, CA

Council of State and Territorial
Epidemiologists, Atlanta, GA

Connecticut Foundation for
Environmentally Safe Schools (ConnFESS),
Newtown, CT

The Deirdre Imus Environmental Health
Center, Hackensack University Medical
Center, Hackensack, NJ

Empire State Consumer Project,
Rochester, NY

Green Schools, Mansfield, MA/National
Health Resources in Action, Boston, MA

Healthy Schools Network,
Albany, NY/ National

Institute for Health and the Environment,
University at Albany, Albany, NY

Issaquah Education Association,
Issaquah, WA

Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois,
Palos Hills, IL

Learning Disabilities Association of Maine,
Windham, ME

Learning Disabilities Association of South
Carolina, Irmo, SC

Learning Disability Association of
Tennessee, Memphis, TN

Maryland Children's Environmental Health
Coalition, Glenwood, MD

Massachusetts Asthma Action Partnership,
Boston, MA

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational
Safety and Health, Boston, MA

National Association of School Nurses,
Silver Spring, MD

National Environmental Health Association,
Joanne Zurcher, Washington, D.C.

Natural Resources Defense Council,
Washington, D.C.

NEA Healthy Schools Caucus, Salem, OR

Parents For Students Safety, Franklin, TN

School Based Health Alliance,
Washington, D.C.

Society for Public Health Education,
Washington, D.C.

Take Care of Your Classroom Air
(TCYCA), Bernie, TX

Women for a Healthy Environment:
Healthy Schools PA, Pittsburgh, PA

INDIVIDUALS

*Organizational affiliations given for information
purposes only.

Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak, Native Village of
Nuiqsut*, Nuiqsut, AK

John Balms, MD, University of California,
San Francisco*, San Francisco, CA

Jennifer Banas, Northeastern Illinois
University*, Chicago, IL

Carl Baum, MD, FAAP, FACMT, Yale
School of Medicine*, New Haven, CT

Sally Darney, Cary, NC

Renee Eaton, Virginia Tech*,
Blacksburg, VA

Michelle V. Fanucchi, University of
Alabama at Birmingham*, Birmingham, AL

Katie A Gallagher, University of
Massachusetts*, Holyoke, MA

Mary Gant, Retired, National Institutes of
Health*, Bethesda, MD

Julie Gast, Utah State University*,
Logan, UT

Robyn Gildea, PhD, RN, University of
Maryland School of Nursing*,
Baltimore, MD

Marc Aaron Guest, American Public Health
Association*, Lexington, KY

Irena Gorski, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg
School of Public Health*, Baltimore, MD

Chip Halverson, ND, Selah Natural
Medicine*, Portland, OR

Maria Jolly, Emory University*, Atlanta, GA

Mariana Kaye, Valley Community
Healthcare*, North Hollywood, CA

Lloyd J. Kolbe, Indiana University School of
Public Health, Bloomington*,
Bloomington, IN

David K. Lohrmann. PhD, MCHES,
Indiana University School of Public Health-
Bloomington*, Bloomington, IN

Tara McAlexander, Johns Hopkins
Bloomberg School of Public Health*,
Baltimore, MD

Daphne Miller, University of California at
San Francisco*, San Francisco, CA

Donald K. Milton, MD, DrPH, Maryland
Institute for Applied Environmental Health,
School of Public Health, University of
Maryland*, College Park, MD

Jerome A. Paulson, MD, FAAP, Professor
Emeritus of Pediatrics and of
Environmental & Occupational Health,
George Washington University School of
Medicine and Health Sciences and George
Washington University Milken Institute
School of Public Health*, Washington, DC

Frederica Perera, DrPH, PhD., Mailman
School of Public Health, Columbia
University*, New York, NY

Darcy Pickens, Visalia, CA

Leslie Rubin MD, Developmental Pediatric
Specialists*, Atlanta, GA

Craig Slatin, University of Massachusetts
Lowell*, Lowell, MA

Lori Andersen Spruance, Brigham Young
University*, Provo, UT

Kathryn Topalis, UConn School of
Medicine*, Farmington, CT

Anne Turner-Henson PhD, RN, FAAN,
UAB School of Nursing*, Birmingham, AL

Jeff Vincent, PhD., Deputy Director, Center
for Cities + Schools*, University of
California, Berkeley, CA

Dr. Leon F. Vinci, Roanoke, VA

Kimberly S. Voss, Tulsa, OK

Ronald White, M.S.T., Environmental
Health Consultant, Washington, D.C.

Yolanda Whyte, MD, Dr. Whyte Pediatrics
Atlanta, GA

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SINCE DECEMBER 8TH, 2016

*Organizational affiliations given for information purposes only.

Martha Engelke, East Carolina University College of Nursing*, Greenville, NC

“Children are our future and they can't learn if they are in a toxic environment. Health issues are a major barrier to good education.”

Maryjane Puffer, The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health, Los Angeles, CA

“Through our work with Los Angeles' school based health centers, we know that many of our children, the most vulnerable children, are exposed to environmental insults that exacerbate their fragile health conditions. On behalf of The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health, I urge you to support our efforts to make every child healthy and able to succeed in school.”

ORGANIZATIONS

Alameda County Early Care and Education Program, Oakland, CA

David Ammend, MD, Northwest Passage, Ltd.*, Frederic, WI

Christina Olbrantz, Columbia University*, New York, NY

California School-Based Health Alliance, Oakland, CA

Jennifer Banas, *Northeastern Illinois University**, Chicago, IL

Sonda Oppewal, UNC Chapel Hill School of Nursing*, Chapel Hill, NC

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI

Jane Bradley, Creative Advertising and Publishing Services*, West Hartford, CT

Marsha Presley, A.T. Still University*, Tempe, AZ

Education Law Center, Newark, NJ

Melissa Cowell, Green Schools*, Mansfield, MA/National

Chelsea Alexandra Schafer, CSUN Institute of Community Health & Wellbeing*, Los Angeles, CA

Green School National Network, Madison, WI

Valerie Davenport, Yellville-Summit School District*, Yellville, AR

Suzanne Sellman, School-Based Health Alliance*, Washington, DC

Improving Kids' Environments, Indianapolis, IN

Martha Engelke, East Carolina University College of Nursing*, Greenville, NC

Catherine Faye Williams, Arkansas School Based Health Alliance, Malvern, AR

Informed Green Solutions, East Burke, VT

Gabrielle Ettlinger, LA County DPH* Los Angeles, CA

Karma Williams, School Based Health Alliance, Lamar, AR

The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health, Los Angeles, CA

Irena Gorski, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*, Baltimore, MD

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Midwest Pesticide Action Center, Chicago, IL

Marissa Hauptman MD, MPH, FAAP, Boston Children's Hospital* Boston, MA

Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition, Springfield, MA

Krystal Henagan, Helotes, TX

School Based Health Alliance of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR

Elizabeth A, Jarpe-Ratner, University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health*, Oak Park, IL

School Health Program at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI

Ann Loree, Littleton, MA

Smackover-Norphlet School Based Health Center, Smackover, AR

Debbie McAdams, El Dorado School Based Health Center*, El Dorado, AR

Youth Bridge, Inc., Fayetteville, AR

Mary Miller, Springdale Public Schools* Springdale, AR

INDIVIDUALS

*Organizational affiliations given for information purposes only.

Susan Acosta, New Mexico Department of Health*, Albuquerque, NM

Emerald S. Mills, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI

Virginia Mott, Maine PTA, Lakeville, ME