



Coalition *for* Healthier Schools

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

Coordinated by Healthy Schools Network

June 24, 2021 – via email

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
S 128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Environment & Related Agencies
S 128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We – the undersigned sixty-six organizations and 39 individuals - write to urge two critical improvements to the President's Budget FY22 Budget for US EPA. The nation and its children, many in the poorest and or most remote areas, have just endured a year school closures and lack of access to education. While we support the PBFY 22 top-line increase for EPA, the proposed boost is not proportional to the risks. Specifically, it does not restore or expand funding to the offices in EPA most critical to keeping schools open safely: the Office of Air and Radiation/Indoor Environments Division and the Office of Children's Health Protection. They have long worked to improve the condition of learning facilities for all children. In a continuing pandemic, we believe schools and child care facilities, children and communities, and the economy, need those offices enhanced to meet the crises of poor indoor air amid the pandemic and severe weather like high heat.

CLEAN AIR IN EVERY SCHOOL. Understanding that poor indoor air is common in schools and erodes children health and learning, in the face of the continuing airborne infective virus, announced by CDC on May 7, 2021, we urge that \$65 Million be directed to EPA's Office of Air and Radiation/Indoor Environments Division's to restore and expand its Reducing the Risks of Indoor Air program and \$10 Million directed to Office of Children's Health Protection to restore and expand pediatric environmental health assistance. The offices provide voluntary education, technical assistance, and related grant programs to educate communities, parents and personnel, schools, states, and tribes on how to improve Indoor Air and fix other problems of educational facilities.

There are 98,000 school buildings enrolling 51 million children. That is more children in fewer schools with fewer staff than five years ago. Schools are more densely occupied than nursing homes and 40% of children have chronic health conditions. Poor indoor air quality can be a severe health risk in 'normal times' for the 6 million American children with asthma, the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness. About half of school children rely on subsidized meal programs, and half are children of color. An estimated 40% of all school children had no internet or devices at home during the past school year.

In 2019, schools were clearly not pandemic-ready, and just as clearly, they were not weather resilient nor climate-ready either. A 2020 US GAO report found tens of thousands of schools needed updated or all new ventilation systems. In spring 2021, a survey found that most schools were unable to implement CDC's reopening guidance. **This means that the 2019 environmental factors that made it impossible to reopen schools fully in 2020 were not addressed: no ventilation and poor sanitation.**

EPA is the only agency, not CDC and not Education, that has authorizations, critical technical information, and educational grant programs to help parents, communities, education leaders, and personnel understand how to keep school buildings open safely and how to reduce barriers to learning. EPA's Indoor Environments Division has a 25+ year history of programs and guidance on aspects of indoor environments like indoor air quality, molds, hazardous chemical management, and flood repairs to schools and child care facilities. Further EPA is continuing to build on its archive of training programs that, ten years ago, had spurred a learning network on school facilities operated as healthy places for children and staff. The children's office supports pediatric environmental health services. The science has only grown over the decades, with the most recent publications on moving air to reduce the viral load from UC Davis and Johns Hopkins, while the Harvard School of Public Health's "Schools for Health" recaps the leading science on healthful indoor environments for learning and contributed significantly to media's understanding of how the virus is transmitted.

Today, K-12 schools are receiving an estimated \$200 billion in COVID relief aid, but not one dollar is required to be spent on indoor air or ventilation. A proportional response to the real risks of contaminated indoor air to children who are required to go to school is needed now from EPA and from this administration.

A proportional response must restore and expand support for the Office of Air and Radiation/Indoor Environments Division working under its authorizations from the Clean Air Act and Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act to host annual symposia and provide education and training to school personnel, districts, and non-governmental organizations and communities both nationally and regionally. A proportional response should also support the Office of Children's Health Protection's grants to pediatric environmental health experts and researchers.

Sincerely,

Alaska Community Action on Toxics
American Public Health Association
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Association of Asthma Educators (PA)
Association of School Business Officials
International (ASBO International)
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
Californians for Pesticide Reform
Cancer Prevention Coalition for Los Angeles
(CA)
Center for Environmental Health
Child Care Aware of America

Children's Environmental Health Center of
the Hudson Valley
at New York Medical Center and Maria Farer
Children's Hospital (NY)
Children's Environmental Health Network
Children's Environmental Protection Alliance
(AL)
Clean and Healthy NY
Coalition for Environmentally Safe Schools
(MA)
Collaborative for High Performance Schools
CT Foundation for Environmentally
Safe Schools

The Deirdre Imus Environmental Health
Center at Hackensack UMC (NJ)
Earth Day Network
Education Law Center
Empire State Consumer Project (NY)
First Focus
Green Schools National Network
Healthy Legacy (MN)
Health Resources in Action
Healthy Schools PA/ Women for a Healthy
Environment
Healthy Schools Network, Inc.
Improving Kids' Environment (IN)
Indoor Air Institute
IPM Institute of North America
Kids for Saving the Earth (MN)
Learning Disabilities Associations of America
Learning Disabilities Association of Arkansas
Learning Disabilities Association of Georgia
Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois
Learning Disabilities Association of Iowa
Learning Disabilities Association of Maine
Learning Disabilities Association of Maryland
Learning Disabilities Association of
Minnesota
Learning Disabilities Association of
Pennsylvania
Learning Disabilities Association of New
Jersey
Learning Disabilities Association of
Oklahoma
Learning Disabilities Association of South
Carolina
Learning Disabilities Association of
Tennessee
Learning Disabilities Association of Texas
Learning Disabilities Association of Utah
Maine PTA
Maryland Children's Environmental Health
Coalition
Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational
Safety and Health
Midwest Pesticide Action Center
National Center for Environmental Health
Strategies
Nontoxic Certified (NY)
Pesticide Action Network of North America
Occupational Health & Safety Section of the
American Public Health Association
Ohio Public Health Association
Parents for Students Safety (TN)

Partners for a Healthier Community (MA)
Pennsylvania Integrated Pest Management
Program
Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition (MA)
Project Green Schools (MA)
Rachel Carson Council (MD)
Regional Asthma Management and
Prevention (CA)
Responsible Purchasing Network
School-Based Health Alliance
School Based Health Alliance of Arkansas
Sierra Club
South Texas Asthma Coalition
Toxics Information Project (RI)
Twenty-first Century Schools Fund (DC)
Valley Community Healthcare (CA)
Western New York Council on Occupational
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List as of June 24, 2021

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