

COALITION FOR HEALTHIER SCHOOLS

A Message to Senate Appropriation and Budget Committees

US EPA Celebrates October as Children's Health Month *October 8-14 Is Protecting Children Where They Learn*

Congress must do more to protect children in schools.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) understands the importance of clean, cool air and clean indoor environments in schools, but needs Congress to adequately fund its work in this area.

This week Congress can celebrate protecting children's health at school by committing to fund EPA's Indoor Air Quality in Schools program, a critical voluntary program with two decades of work with K-12 and childcare stakeholders and communities but with insufficient funding. EPA is the only agency with the authorizations and the in-house expertise to significantly improve the health and well-being of America's school children, yet no funding is specifically dedicated to the emergency of unaddressed environmental health threats in the nation's schools.

The Senate's FY 24 Appropriations report language for EPA (see below) cites the requirement for EPA to work with other agencies to improve school facility environments through sharing its expertise. What EPA needs is to disseminate its expertise nationwide; to get started it needs a recommendation from the appropriations committee of how much to spend. Students are in dire need of safer and healthier facilities to learn.

We recommend that EPA's expert Environments Division/IAQ program be directed to spend up to \$50 million in FY 24. That puts EPA on par with its sister agencies and allows EPA to offer voluntary education and training grants, convene grantees and other stakeholders, update key guidance, and provide technical assistance to schools on the key issues of how to **prevent** environmental problems and how to **intervene effectively**.

Who supports EPA healthy schools funding? Ninety-five (95) national and state NGOs and twenty-three (23) US Senators have urged appropriations for EPA's healthy school program this year. See list of supporters below.

20% of the US Population affected every day. Currently US public schools provide over eight (8) billion square feet of learning space, valued at over \$3 trillion, holding 50 million children and 7 million employees, or about 20% of the total US population every day. If you count parents missing work to care for sick children, the percentage is far higher. Yet the buildings remain in poor condition and are not even ready for extreme weather or prepared for the increasing numbers

of infectious diseases. Clean indoor air is critical to keeping schools open and students healthy; dirty indoor air is a health concern for nearly 1 in 13 school-aged children with asthma. Indoor environmental triggers increase the risks of severe asthma attacks and asthma remains the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness.

No parent or community wants to endure more long-term school closures. Closures have hobbled education and hampered the development of social skills for millions of children.

Clean, cool air is not happening in schools; here is what's happening instead:

- ✓ **Heat Waves, High Water, Hurricanes. Now What?**

Natural disasters can devastate learning and schools are not ready.

New York Times, October 11

- ✓ **Remote Class Exacerbated Inequalities, UNESCO Report Says**

An “ed-tech tragedy” from unprecedented reliance on technology that hindered low-tech alternatives.

New York Times, September 7

- ✓ **A heat wave and lack of air conditioning disrupt school districts nationwide.**

NPR Morning Edition, September 6

- ✓ **Bad Ventilation Remains Threat to U.S. Students: *Federal Aid Unused***

New York Times, page 1, August 27

- ✓ **COVID-19 surge causes Districts in Kentucky, Texas, and Chicago Public Schools closures**

ABC News August 25

- ✓ **Why Haven't We Made It Safer to Breathe in Classrooms?**

Investigation reveals schools purchased questionable room air cleaners that may harm, not help, children.

New York Times, Opinion, August 13

- ✓ **CDC calls for five air changes of clean air per hour (ACH) in classrooms, MERV 13 filters.**

to reduce the risk of infections including COVID-19

Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, updated guidance, May 12

Congress Can Fix the Senate Appropriations FY 24 Text for EPA on Schools

“Children and other sensitive populations.—The Committee recognizes the importance of improving the internal and exterior environments at K–12 schools

ADD < and directs EPA Indoor Environments Division to spend up to \$50M to advance healthier schools for all >

In order to ensure the Administration is providing the most comprehensive information regarding opportunities for assistance to schools, the Committee requires the Agency to work with the Departments of Energy and Education, including to update the requirements and report required by the Energy Act of 2020 (Public Law 116–260). In executing this, the Committee recommends new and existing opportunities for schools to improve their environments for students, reduce emissions, and eliminate frequently-littered plastic sources.”

[US EPA Healthy School Environments](#)

23 Senators supporting Appropriations for EPA’s Indoor Air/healthy schools program this year

Gillibrand, with

Baldwin

Blumenthal

Booker

Brown

Cardin

Carper

Casey

Durbin

Duckworth

Feinstein

Hassan

Lujan

Markey

Ossoff

Padilla

Sanders

Smith

Stabenow

Warnock

Warren

Whitehouse

Wyden

95 NGOs supporting appropriations for EPA's Indoor Air/ healthy schools program this year

National Organizations

21st Century Schools Fund
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Allergy & Asthma Network
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Federation of Teachers
American School Health Association
APHA Occupational Health Section
Asian Pacific Islander Women's Forum
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Blue Green Alliance
Break the Cycle
Center for Environmental Health
Children's Environmental Health Network
Coalition for Environmentally Safe Communities
Coalition for Healthier Schools
Coalition of National Health Education Organizations
Collaborative for High Performance Schools
Coming Clean
Earth Day.org
Environmental Working Group
First Focus Campaign for Children
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, Inc
Green Building Alliance
Health Promotion Consultants
Healthy Schools Network
IPM Institute of North America
Maine Indoor Air Quality Council
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of School Nurses
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Coalition for Healthier Schools
National Environmental Health Association
National Healthy Schools Caucus
National PTA
New York State PTA
PCBSinSchools
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit/Region 4
Pesticide Action Network
Project Green Schools

Quality First EHS, Inc.
Rachel Carson Council
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility, CA
Saratoga Institute
Reduce CO2 USA
Responsible Purchasing Network
ScienceCorps
Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education
Until Justice Data Partners
UNdauntedK12
WE ACT
Women's Voices for the Earth

State Organizations

7 Directions of Service, NC
AFSCME Council 4, CT
Air Balancing Service Co., CT
Alaska Community Action on Toxics, AK
American Nurses Association- New York (ANA-NY) NY
Asthma Alliance of North Carolina
Center for Professional Academic Consulting, DC
ConnectiCOSH, CT
Connecticut Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Society, CT
Connecticut AFL-CIO, CT
Connecticut Coalition for Economic and Environmental Justice
Connecticut Education Association, CT
Connecticut Nurses Association, CT
ConnFESS, CT
Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs
Connecticut State Building Trades Council
CSEA SEIU Local 2001, CT
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, TX
Drumlins End Farms, NY
Florida Clinicians for Climate Action, FL
Foundation for Fair Contracting of Connecticut
Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition, NY
HARAMBEE House Inc., GA
Healthy Schools Now - WEC, NJ
Informed Green Solutions Inc., VT
LEW Environmental Services LLC, NJ
Locust Point Community Garden, MD
Maryland Children's Environmental Health Coalition, MD

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, MA
MGH Innovative One Health Solutions, MA
New Jersey Association of Designated Persons, NJ
NJ Work Environment Council, NJ
NJ Healthy Schools NOW
New York State Parent Teacher Association (NYS PTA), NY
Quattrocchi Kwok Architects, CA
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention, CA
Ryerson Innovative Enterprises LLC, CA
South Texas Asthma Coalition, TX
Take Care of Your Classroom Air, TX
Toxic Free North Carolina
Metal Workers Local Union #40, CT
West End Revitalization Association -WERA, NC
Selah Natural Medicine Portland, OR and Kalispell, MT
Women for a Healthy Environment, PA

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