



# Coalition *for* Healthier Schools

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

Coordinated by Healthy Schools Network

August 1, 2025

**The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.**

Chairman, Make America Healthy Again Commission  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20201

**The Honorable Vincent Haley**

Executive Director, Make America Healthy Again Commission  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 469  
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Executive Director Haley:

As organizations sharing an interest and expertise in children's health, we respectfully request a meeting with the Make America Healthy Again Commission at your earliest convenience to discuss the importance of prioritizing PreK-12 school environmental health in the Commission's forthcoming Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy.

Improving school environmental health is not only urgent—it is one of the most *immediate and achievable opportunities* to reduce harmful exposures, prevent chronic illness, and support healthier learning and development for all children.

Children spend more waking hours in school and early learning environments than anywhere other than their homes. School environments are a defining influence on the health of over 50 million children in the nation's public schools. Any meaningful national strategy to address childhood chronic disease must place schools at its center.

The Commission's mandate under **Executive Order 14212** makes this conversation particularly relevant. The Order directs the Commission to study contributing causes of childhood chronic disease crisis, including environmental exposures, and it explicitly authorizes the Commission to consult with experts outside the federal government.

Conditions in schools need federal attention. The American Society of Civil Engineers has repeatedly assigned school facilities a grade of "D," citing massive deferred maintenance. Most schools built before 1980 still contain asbestos, lead, and PCBs, while mold, flooding, extreme

heat and other health and environmental hazards harm health and routinely disrupt learning. Poor indoor air quality is one of the leading causes of absenteeism, puts children's health at risk, and negatively affects academic performance. Comprehensive school environmental health programs are rare, and schools have little technical support for assessing risk and remediating hazards. This is particularly the case for tribal schools and other small, rural-remote districts.

We hope you will grant us an opportunity to present our suggestions for the Commission's Make Our Children Healthy Again strategy, including steps to tackle indoor air quality problems, toxic substances in schools (including lead, PFAS-containing artificial turf and other hazardous chemicals), tools for schools, and support for states and tribes to advance comprehensive school environmental health programs.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. You may contact John E. Reeder ([jreeder@healthyschools.org](mailto:jreeder@healthyschools.org)) for your response.

Sincerely,

Mary Filardo  
*21st Century School Fund*

Deborah P. Brown  
*American Lung Association*

Kenneth Mendez  
*Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America*

Tom R. Fox  
*Center for Environmental Health*

Nsedu Witherspoon  
*Children's Environmental Health Network*

John E. Reeder  
*Healthy Schools Network*

Dr. Willian Datema  
*Society for Public Health Education*

Kate Clabaugh  
*National PTA*

**cc: Members of the MAHA Commission**