

## CALL FOR PRESIDENT'S CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL Caring for Our Future – 61 Million Children in School and Child Care

January 2017



### President-Elect Donald Trump's Acceptance Speech:

"I pledge to every citizen of our land that I will be President for all Americans....We are going to fix our inner cities and rebuild our highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools, hospitals. We're going to rebuild our infrastructure, which will become... second to none. And we will put millions of our people to work as we rebuild it."

- Nov. 9, 2016

**The President's 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 schools, generate benefits for all children, save taxpayer money, and provide local jobs in thousands of communities across the country.

### **The President's Children's Initiative addresses INFRASTRUCTURE and CHILD HEALTH:**

**1. Fund Facility Infrastructure and Transportation:** Any federal infrastructure bill must address the dire need for environmental improvements to existing public PK-12 and child care center buildings, resulting in facilities which are built, renovated, and operated to promote children's health and learning and to be resilient to severe storms. Target actions with a priority on low-wealth schools must include 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 research and other programs and grants. These can provide public health services (tracking, interventions, reporting, and education) in partnership with city and state health agencies and with pediatric environmental health experts nationwide.

The President's Children's Initiative should be led by HHS/CDC and EPA, advised by ED, with 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 President's Children's Initiative must include funds for convening annual symposia attended by schools, agencies, advisers, and grantees and funds for the Education Facilities Clearinghouse.

**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 daily such as lead, mercury, 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>.

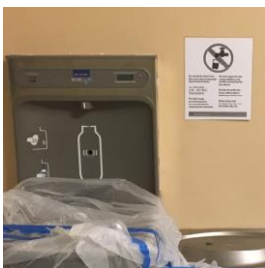
**IOM:** There is sufficient evidence to prevent environmental exposures in indoor environments, see <http://tinyurl.com/j5kzuhe>.

**Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH Executive Director**  
**Children's Environmental Health Network**  
**Washington, DC**

“We know that healthier children lead to healthier adolescents and adults. As a result, it is vital that we stand up as a nation and do all that we can to protect them and support the growth of their full potential in our child care and school environments.”

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

“ASBO International urges President-elect Donald Trump to launch an initiative that funds school infrastructure projects and promotes healthy learning environments for all students. We encourage him to appoint 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.”



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



EPA/5 documents school chemical storage hazards.



Carbon dioxide in classroom: adult critical thinking declines at 1,000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> 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/hpzzyft>.
- *Environmental Health at School* conferences in 2015-16, led by Healthy Schools Network, engaged CDC, EPA, NIOSH, pediatric environmental health experts, and others 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>

## 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

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

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

Issaquah Education Association,  
Issaquah, WA

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.

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  
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Lowell\*, Lowell, MA

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Kimberly S. Voss, Tulsa, OK

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