



## *Connecticut Public Health Association*

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### **Green Cleaning in Schools**

In order to reduce student's and school staff members exposure to air pollution from hazardous chemicals in cleaning supplies, the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) supports H.B. 6496: An Act Concerning Green Cleaning in schools. Specifically, the Connecticut Public Health Association supports the positions of the Connecticut Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools on this bill. The CPHA supports the use of safer cleaning alternatives that are Green Seal or EcoLogo certified cleaners. The CPHA asks the legislature to act favorably on this bill in order to ensure that our students, who are the most vulnerable to the adverse health effects to chemical exposures from cleaning products, have the same protections as Connecticut State workers.

#### **Background**

Cleaning supplies that emit certain chemicals significantly contribute to indoor air pollution in schools. Indoor air pollution has been ranked among the top five environmental risks to public health by the Environmental Protection Agency. It is estimated that a single custodian uses 194 pounds of chemicals per year and 25 percent of these chemicals are hazardous to our health. [3] Children are more vulnerable to exposures to toxic cleaning supplies due to their size, increased metabolic rates, and developing organ systems. [5,6]

Chemicals emitted by certain cleaning products have been associated with a marked risk for increased asthma, respiratory distress syndromes, and other dysfunction in children and adults. The hazardous chemicals in the cleaning supplies act as "environmental triggers" for asthma and other respiratory dysfunctions.[1,2,6] Asthma is a major public health problem in the United States. [6] Recent research in Connecticut's public schools has identified asthma to be of epidemic proportions for Connecticut's school-aged children. [4,6] In Connecticut, it is estimated that 1 of 11 school children have doctor diagnosed asthma. [4] In the United States, Asthma accounts for 14 million lost days of school missed annually and asthma is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization among those younger than 15 years of age. [6] Additionally, NIOSH attributes 12% of occupational asthma to exposures to cleaning chemicals. [7] Research has also linked elevated asthma rates found among teachers, teacher's aides and custodians as a result of exposures to indoor air pollutants from cleaning supplies. [8]

Fortunately, safer cleaning products such as Green Seal or EcoLogo certified cleaners are available to be used in schools and the cost is equal to or even less than the costs of hazardous cleaning supplies. For example, reports from several states such as Georgia, Florida, and Pennsylvania have indicated that they project saving money from switching to safer cleaning alternatives in their schools. Reports from evaluations of green cleaning programs in schools in California, Chicago and Massachusetts, have indicated that the safer cleaning products are not only cost effective but also the products clean as well, if not better, than the hazardous cleaning supplies. [9,10,11]

#### **Recommendation**

CPHA supports H.B. 6496: An Act Concerning Green Cleaning in schools. Harms caused by hazardous chemicals in cleaning supplies are preventable. CPHA supports public policies such as HB 6496 that prevent or at least reduce exposures to hazardous air pollutants, such as those emitted from cleaning supplies. The CPHA urges the Connecticut legislature to act favorably on H.B. 6496 and allow Connecticut to be the next State after New York and Illinois to require green cleaning in schools. Connecticut has already demonstrated the feasibility of implementing green-cleaning programs since this a requirement in all state buildings.

## References

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