



HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK

... for children ... health ... environment ... education ... communities ... since 1995 ...

Summer 2022 News

Thank you, President Biden: White House hands US EPA the Clean Air Challenge

This is the first-ever White House to recognize the importance of indoor air. In tapping EPA to lead a new [Clean Air in Buildings Challenge](#), a key part of the White House National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, it is also the first to call for sustained federal action. This is a huge opportunity for EPA to strengthen its work on indoor air quality (IAQ) in schools and other settings. We and our national partners immediately stepped up, meeting in person with EPA executive staff in early March.

The \$110M Plan. We outlined a \$110M US EPA plan for Clean Air/Healthy Schools, then rolled it out with the support of 63 education, public health, and environment organizations. Senators Gillibrand (D-NY) and Markey (D-MA) also leapt to action. Gillibrand organized Senate support for the \$110M plan. Markey advanced a \$97M program to reduce legacy toxics in schools. We support both.

HUGE SUCCESS!

National summit COVID, Climate, Children & Schools

We all need to know how schools can stay open and children can stay healthy amid the disasters in their communities—climate change and the pandemic. In April, our summit tackled these core questions in six technical sessions. Nearly 300 people joined us from 45 states, plus tribes and foreign nations, representing schools/districts, federal and state agencies, and NGOs.

The summit opened with a panel on justice, featuring students who spoke movingly about their personal experiences with climate change. Speakers from the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, plus US EPA and the American Academy of Pediatrics, provided passionate insights on the issues. Other technical sessions covered school building climate resilience and adaptation, “calming” school indoor environments for sensitive students, decarbonizing schools, climate impacts on children, and revitalizing playgrounds to be climate ready.

The summary report—coming this summer—will include video links to the speakers. It will also be the foundation for formal presentations on climate, children, and schools at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in November.



L-R, Alejandra Nunez, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation and Janet McCabe, EPA Deputy Administrator



EPA staff — Top, Jonathan Edwards, Director, Office of Air and Radiation; David Rowson, Director, Indoor Environments Division. Bottom, Alisa Smith and Tracy Enger, Indoor Environments Division.



New York: bold actions on children's health

LEAD: We closed out 2021 with a big win for all of NY's kids: [Governor Kathy Hochul signed our bill](#) into law on lead in school drinking water, lowering the action level to 5 ppb and requiring retesting at 3-year intervals. HS Network co-led the statewide coalition with the NY League of Conservation Voters and NRDC to secure the lowest lead levels in the largest k-12 state system to date. Now we shift our focus to the health department, which is drafting updated regulations.

A BIGGER BOND ACT: In 2021, NY policy leaders adopted a \$3B environmental bond act to send to voters, but it did not include K-12 schools. When Governor Hochul took office, HS Network revisited that gap, meeting with her staff and NYSERDA (the state's energy authority). One big result: a larger proposed act—\$4.2B—that now addresses school environments. If voters approve it in November, schools will be eligible for bond act funding, including \$400 million to help low-resource schools switch to renewable energy sources while protecting indoor air quality.

HS Network will be working to educate parents, teachers and the public in general. We'll provide information about schools and the need for specific actions on climate, such as how new funds can help NY's schools become more resilient and help mitigate climate impacts. Information from our April 2022 summit will help us make the case.

MORE FUNDING TO PROTECT KIDS: As we have urged, New York's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has also been expanded—to \$400 million. The EPF will fund children's environmental health (a program we seeded a decade ago), environmental justice, and renewable energy. We're pressing for EPF funding on toxics in schools and green cleaning. EPF funding could also support efforts under NY's ambitious climate law. But the state has not been clear on its plans, so this aspect of the spending remains murky.

INDOOR AIR: Indoor air in schools remains a major underappreciated and underregulated concern here in NYS and in NYC, as well as nationally. In mid-May, the NYS Department of Health announced it would consider metrics and other reforms to drive clean indoor air in all schools statewide, a breakthrough. We are preparing for the long fight.

HS Network begins service on federal committee on children and disasters

On February 17th, HS Network Executive Director Claire Barnett was sworn in as one of 13 voting members of the [National Advisory Committee on Children and Disasters](#) (NACCD), reporting to US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra. The committee will recommend ways to better protect children's "physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral wellbeing" from disasters. It will explore ways to improve prevention and preparedness, as well as response and recovery—all with a focus on children's unique needs.

Meet our newest Healthy Schools Heroes

During our April summit, we honored some of our country's most tenacious fighters for children's environmental health. We presented National Healthy Schools Hero Awards to four accomplished advocates:

- Judy Braiman, President, Empire State Consumer Project
- Mireille Ellsworth, Chair, Hawaii Healthy Schools Caucus
- Daniel Lefkowitz, founder of [pcbinschools.org](#)
- The National Association of School Nurses

They join 37 prior honorees. See all of our Healthy Schools Heroes [here](#).

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\$2,500 supports a one-semester intern; \$1,000 underwrites DC travel; \$100 covers the cost of environmental health information and referral for a frustrated parent. In-kind donations of paper, printing, or travel are always appreciated. Project sponsorships and donations in honor of family are warmly welcomed. Just call us! Healthy Schools Network is a 501(c)(3) not for profit.