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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Healthy Schools Network Welcomes Dr. Pamela Pugh as Executive Director

Leadership transition comes as new federal data underscore urgent school facility and environmental health challenges

Washington, DC, Monday, October 5 — Healthy Schools Network (HS Network), a national nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that every child has a healthy place to learn, has announced that [Pamela L. Pugh, DrPH, MS](#), will take the helm as its next Executive Director. Jennifer Lemon will continue serving as Deputy Director.

Pugh is a public health scientist and nationally recognized leader whose career has focused on the environments in which children live, learn, and play. Her experience spans children's environmental health, healthy homes and childhood lead poisoning prevention, public health, education policy, environmental and climate justice, community health improvement, and organizational leadership.

"Dr. Pugh brings an extraordinary combination of public health expertise, education leadership, environmental health experience, and a deep commitment to children and communities," said Susan Goekler, PhD, MCHES, Chair of the Healthy Schools Network Board of Directors. "The Board is excited to welcome her into this role and equally pleased that Jennifer Lemon will continue as Deputy Director. Together, they bring the leadership, experience, and continuity needed to guide Healthy Schools Network into its next chapter."

Pugh currently serves as President of the Michigan State Board of Education and previously served as the City of Flint's first Chief Public Health Advisor during the Flint water crisis. Her work has included securing and managing significant federal and philanthropic investments in childhood lead poisoning prevention, healthy homes, maternal and child health, community resilience, and other public health initiatives. Pugh has also served on the Healthy Schools Network Board of Directors, giving her an established connection to the organization, its mission, and its national partners.

"Healthy Schools Network's mission brings together so many threads of my life's work including the health of children, the environments that shape their development, and the fundamental importance of ensuring that every child has a safe and healthy place to learn," Pugh said. "I am deeply honored to build upon the extraordinary work of founder and founding Executive Director Claire Barnett, and grateful to the Board, staff, advisers, partners, and collaborators who have helped sustain and advance this mission over three decades."

Barnett, who founded Healthy Schools Network in 1995 and built the organization into a nationally recognized award-winning voice for children's environmental health and healthy school environments, remains active as senior advisor to the group.

Jennifer Lemon has served as Acting Executive Director since April 1, 2026. Former interim executive director, John Reeder, is now senior policy consultant for the organization.

The leadership transition comes at a time of renewed national attention to school facility conditions. A September 2026 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that 47 percent of school districts experienced chronic facility issues that disrupted learning during the 2024–25 school year. Nearly one in five districts canceled school because of facility problems, affecting an estimated 2 million students and resulting in about 3.5 million lost days of learning. District leaders also reported persistent funding constraints, with 55 percent saying their most recent facilities budgets were insufficient to meet their needs. [Government Accountability Office](#).

“These findings reinforce something Healthy Schools Network has understood for decades: school buildings are not separate from education,” Pugh said. “The conditions inside those buildings directly affect children’s health, attendance, and ability to learn, as well as staff health and productivity.”

About Healthy Schools Network

Healthy Schools Network is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1995 and dedicated to ensuring that every child has a healthy place to learn. The organization advances children’s environmental health through research, policy advocacy, education, and collaboration with families, educators, public health professionals, government agencies, and national partners.

For more information, visit HealthfulSchools.org.

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