

CALIFORNIA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HEALTHY SCHOOLS

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Whereas, Children in California spend as many as six to eight hours per day in school; and,

Whereas, Limited resources for school building maintenance and a recent increase in the construction of portable school classrooms has resulted in inadequate ventilation, roof and seam leaks, biological contamination (e.g. mold growth), dusts and vapors from construction and chemical emissions from building materials (1) and,

Whereas, An estimated 77 percent of California's public elementary schools and child care facilities have been painted with lead based paint, an estimated six percent of California elementary schools contain bare soils in children's play areas which exceed the U.S. EPA reference value for lead, and 18.5 percent of California schools are likely to have lead drinking water at or above the federal action level (2); and,

Whereas, 87% of surveyed California school districts report using highly toxic pesticides identified by state or federal agencies as known or suspected carcinogens, acute or chronic neurotoxins, developmental and reproductive toxicants, or hormone disrupting chemicals (3); and,

Whereas, Numerous studies have correlated pesticide exposure with increased risk of childhood cancer, and reproductive, developmental and neurological disorders; and,

Whereas, Children are at greater risk from environmental contaminants both because of greater physiologic susceptibility and greater relative exposure. (4) Children's hand to mouth behavior increases their exposures to contaminants in dust and soil. Children are also less able to metabolize and excrete certain toxicants, and their developing organs are more susceptible to disruption (5); therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the CMA support efforts to protect indoor air at California schools through increased funding for school maintenance; improved standards for school design, construction and repair, including portable or temporary school structures; and increased indoor air quality training and monitoring; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the CMA support efforts to adopt standards and provide training for the purpose of reducing or eliminating in-school exposures to lead; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the CMA recommend statewide implementation of least-toxic school pest management programs, with such programs precluding the use of highly toxic pesticides, reducing over-all pesticide use in and around school grounds, and including parents in pest management decision making.

References

1 US General Accounting Office. 1996. School Facilities: Profiles of School Condition by State. Washington, DC (Report No: GAO/HEHS-96-148).

2 California Department of health Services. 1998. Lead Hazards in California's Public Elementary Schools and Child Care Facilities. Sacramento, CA. (April 15).

3 California Public Interest Research Group Charitable Trust. 1998. Failing Health: Pesticide Use in California Schools. San Francisco, CA.

4 National Research Council. 1993. Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children. National Academy Press. Washington, D.C.

5 Wargo, John. 1996. Our Children's Toxic Legacy: How Science and Law Fail to Protect Us from Pesticides. Yale University Press. New Haven, CT.