



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Sept 29, 2006

CONTACT: Fawn Pattison (919) 833-5333

New Law to Protect Children from Toxics at School ***School Children's Health Act (H1502) Goes into Effect Oct 1***

RALEIGH – On October 1st, a new law called the School Children's Health Act will go into effect in North Carolina, protecting children from pesticides, mercury, diesel fumes, arsenic-treated wood, mold and mildew at public schools in North Carolina.

The School Children's Health Act passed the NC General Assembly and was signed into law by the governor this past July. It directs public school systems in North Carolina to use common-sense, low-cost, and even cost-savings measures to reduce student and staff exposure to hazardous contaminants in school buildings, making NC public schools safer, healthier places to learn and work. The NC Department of Public Instruction will issue guidelines for schools to implement the new law.

"It's just common sense," stated Representative Grier Martin (D-Wake), one of the bill's sponsors. "You don't want toxic chemicals in school buildings that can harm kids' health and make it harder for them to learn. It just so happens that we can reduce the risks from these hazards in a way that's straightforward and cost-effective, too."

Pediatrician Debbie Leiner, a member of the NC Pediatric Society, agrees. "There is growing scientific evidence that exposure to these common contaminants can increase children's risk for many kinds of disease, including respiratory illness, learning difficulties and in some cases even cancer. From a medical perspective, this bill makes good sense – to prevent serious illness in the first place by making schools safer for kids," Dr. Leiner said.

Beginning this fall, schools will have to reduce students' exposures to diesel fumes from idling engines, coat or plan to remove arsenic-treated wood on playground equipment, make sure there is no elemental mercury in their science classrooms, and give all parents and staff the option of being notified 72 hours in advance of pesticide applications at school.

The new law also requires schools to start managing pests with a common-sense method known as "Integrated Pest Management," or IPM. Schools will have five years to fully implement the new IPM programs, but many districts around the state are already using it, and have even reported cost savings as a result. In fact, several school districts will be honored by NCSU for their leadership in School IPM at an awards ceremony in Raleigh on October 18th. (*The award winners are listed at the end of this press release.*)

"By changing simple practices, you can have a great effect," said Mike Burriss, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities at Wake County Schools, which has been recognized for the success



of its long-standing IPM program. "[IPM] is a very simple process, and it works very well," Burriss said. "It actually lowers my costs, because I don't have to provide pesticides and training on how to use them."

"The legislature did a great job of taking a safety-first approach with schools when they passed this law," stated Fawn Pattison, Executive Director of the Agricultural Resources Center, a group that advocates for School IPM. "The old-fashioned way of doing things was to ask, 'how much of this chemical can we use before we hurt somebody?' School systems must now get smarter about asking instead how they can get hazardous toxics out school in the first place. I think that's real progress."

The bill was strongly endorsed by the NC Pediatric Society, Agricultural Resources Center, Conservation Council of NC, Action for Children NC, the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, and the Chairman of the State Board of Education, Howard Lee.

School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Recognition Awards

from the NCSU School IPM Program (<http://schoolipm.ncsu.edu>)

October 18th, 2006, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm,

Embassy Suites (Raleigh-Durham), 201 Harrison Oaks Blvd, Raleigh NC 27513

List of Honorees:

I. Recognition for efforts to implement new IPM programs

Cabarrus County Schools
Davidson County Schools
Gates County Schools
Harnett County Schools
Moore County Schools
Person County Schools
Sampson County Schools
Swain County Schools

II. Award for Implementing IPM programs

Beaufort County Schools
Cumberland County Schools
Durham Public Schools
Northampton County Schools

III. Award for Leading IPM programs

Orange County Schools