

**Empire State Consumer Project
Center for Health, Environment and Justice
Healthy Schools Network**

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Contacts: Judy Braiman, ESCP, 585-383-1317, judybraiman@frontiernet.net
Anne Rabe, CHEJ, 518-732-4538, annerabe@msn.com
Claire Barnett, HSNetwork, 202-543-7555, CBarnett@healthyschools.org

**LE ROY SCHOOL STUDENTS NEUROLOGICAL ILLNESS SPREADS,
GROUPS REQUEST AGENCIES TO FULLY INVESTIGATE ENVIRONMENTAL, VACCINE AND
OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES**

Release Letters Sent to State and Federal Environmental, Health and Education Agencies

(Rochester/Albany, NY) Environment, consumer and environmental health groups, backed by Le Roy, NY parents, today urged federal and state agencies to conduct a full investigation of all possible sources for the outbreak of a neurological disorder affecting school children at the Le Roy high school in Genesee County. The coalition of groups released Freedom of Information Act letters and other letter requests to the NYS Department of Health (DOH), Le Roy Central School District, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), NYS Education Department (SED) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The letters requested that there be a transparent environmental investigation to look into whether there is any contamination from gas wells on the school property, a nearby Federal Superfund site, a State Superfund site, a delisted State Superfund site, past insecticide and pesticide uses, and other school facility environmental conditions. In addition, the letters asked how the DOH investigated vaccines, infections and communicable diseases as possible causes.

Judy Braiman, President, Empire State Consumer Project, said "We ask children in school to show their work when problem-solving. Now we are asking the agencies to 'show your work.' Among other issues, we are asking about the qualifications and independence of the health professionals initially consulted. Earlier this month, the DOH declined to share their evidence, and labeled the illness 'conversion disorder.' That is a diagnosis of exclusion. They need to fully assess all factors such as vaccines, infections and communicable diseases or environmental exposures, before saying the multiple cases are attributed to a mass hysteria."

Parents of two ill Le Roy school students, Jim Dupont and Beth Miller, stated: "We are overwhelmed by the complex problems now facing too many families and their affected children. We hope that full, appropriate, and speedy investigations will help prevent more illnesses. Parents need backup: we appreciate the help because we absolutely cannot do this on our own. Environmental conditions need to be investigated, before they are ruled out."

Claire Barnett, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network, said, "We are alarmed by the early rush to judgment. The school's January 2012 environmental reports are so narrow and so generic they could not give any school anywhere a 'clean bill of health,' let alone Le Roy, which was built on swampy land, operates gas wells, and is near State and Federal Superfund sites. Independent qualified professionals in pediatric environmental health and in indoor environments and in outdoor environments are needed.

Anne Rabe, Campaign Coordinator, Center for Health, Environment & Justice, said, "The state and federal agencies need to fully investigate all possible toxic exposure pathways that could be impacting students and school personnel. We hope that this is not the case, but toxic exposures cannot be ruled out until adequate environmental testing is done. The community needs a transparent environmental investigation plan conducted by the agencies and school. If the school is burning raw gas laced with toxic contaminants, then ambient air testing of the gas wells,

school boiler stack and the school's indoor air need to be done. Soil and water testing of the school property is needed to ensure that rumors of past industrial dumping in the area, as well as the nearby State Superfund Lapp Insulator site, delisted State Superfund Target Products site, and the Lehigh Valley Derailment Federal Superfund site, which created contaminated groundwater in the past, has not polluted the school property."

The Empire State Consumer Association, Healthy Schools Network and the Center for Health, Environment & Justice, filed Freedom of Information Act letters and other letter requests with the Le Roy Central School District, DOH and SED asking them to investigate environmental factors, such as carbon monoxide, the possible impact of the nearby TCE-contaminated Federal Superfund site, gas wells and raw gas uses onsite, occupational health complaints, as well as DOH's management of the investigation. CHEJ also released its request to EPA Region 2 and DEC regarding the Superfund site, four mile plume of highly toxic TCE in the groundwater, and four gas wells. The Network also released its request to the SED on Le Roy school facility inspections

Links to all the documents are below, Both the Le Roy district and SED have initiated responses, as has DEC. Over the weekend, the Le Roy district posted a new public statement about the outbreak, indicating it was participating with various agencies to assess environmental and other factors.

Empire State Consumer Project, works to reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals toxic to human and environmental health and well-being of all consumers, especially children. www.kindersafe.org

[FOIA to Le Roy CSD - http://tinyurl.com/7hqy4d](http://tinyurl.com/7hqy4d)

[FOIA to NYS DOH - http://tinyurl.com/7y36s8v](http://tinyurl.com/7y36s8v)

Healthy Schools Network, the nation's leading nonprofit promoting children's environmental health in schools through research, award winning public education and assistance for parents, personnel and schools, and policy advocacy. www.HealthySchools.org

[FOIA to NYS Education Department \(SED\) - http://tinyurl.com/6tx55v8](http://tinyurl.com/6tx55v8)

Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, a national environmental health organization working with communities to prevent harm from toxic exposures, provides technical and organizing assistance and public education, and organizes national and state environmental health campaigns. www.chej.org

[Letter to EPA Region 2 - http://tinyurl.com/6p4gbqk](http://tinyurl.com/6p4gbqk)

[Letter to DEC regarding Federal Superfund site and TCE groundwater plume, and active gas wells - http://tinyurl.com/7nw7vw8](http://tinyurl.com/7nw7vw8)