



HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK, INC.

PRESS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Don't Put Schools on Hazardous Sites
Legislature Must Assure Healthy and Safe Schools for All NYS Children
Close the Leasing Loophole**

New York, NY (July 9, 2007) – Advocates from across the City and State have come together to call on the Legislature to protect children's health while at school by closing a loophole that exists in the current NYC School Construction Authority leasing program.

Currently, the NYC School Construction Authority plans, as part its five-year capital plan, to lease over 30 buildings across the city to be used as schools. With limited clean land available, many organizations have voiced concerns about the possibility of leasing buildings on or near hazardous waste sites.

Existing requirements that include public oversight and environmental review that now apply to new construction or renovation projects do not apply to these leased facilities and there is the potential to lease facilities that are on hazardous waste sites.

Stephen Boese, New York State Director of Healthy Schools Network said, "Children are uniquely vulnerable to environmental hazards, and their health can be severely impacted by environmental toxins that are present at some schools. Schools sited on toxic or hazardous sites are therefore a major concern. Exposure to toxins from these sites can result in various health problems including asthma as well as behavioral problems and learning disabilities".

"In our rightful effort to improve education, we must remember that sick children cannot learn. Children are compelled by law to attend school, yet they have no OSHA protections, no public health protections, and none of the usual health and safety protections that most workers expect in their workplace. Since children have no right of recourse when their health and safety is threatened at school, we must make every effort to assure that school facilities are healthy places that promote learning and education".

For example childhood asthma, which is known to effect over a quarter of children in some city communities, is an environmentally triggered disease. Vapor intrusion from hazardous sites will exacerbate asthma, in addition to causing other health and learning problems.

To protect the health of children, the leasing loophole must be closed by the legislature and these facilities must take part in public oversight and an environmental review.

Mr. Boese also noted, “There is no State law specifically protecting children from having their schools located on toxic and hazardous sites. We must assure that all schools are located on clean and healthy sites. Closing the leasing loophole is a step in the right direction”.

Healthy Schools Network (HSN) is a national not for profit environmental health organization dedicated to ensuring that every child has an environmentally healthy school that is clean and in good repair, through research, information, and advocacy. Its Clearinghouse has offered information and assistance to parents and schools in every state; it won a US EPA Children’s Health Protection Award in 2005. HSN supports policy reforms and funds to address school environments in New York and federally with state and national partner organizations.

For more information, please visit www.healthyschools.org.

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School Leasing Press Conference

July 9, 2007



New York, NY: (from left to right) Joe Mugivan; Stephen Boese, Healthy Schools Network; Mary McKinney, Concerned Residents Organization; Dave Palmer NYLPI; Betsy Gotbaum, NYC Public Advocate; James Gennaro, NYC Council Member; Letitia James, Council Member/Chair, Environmental Protection; Kaylyn Acton-Chadee; Kathleen Acton-Chadee; Robert Jackson, NYC Council Member/Chair Education Committee; Katie Acton, Kaylyn and Kathleen’s mother; and Kizzy Charles-Guzman, WE ACT.