

Contacts:

Paul Towers, Pesticide Watch Education Fund, 916-216-1082, paul@pesticidewatch.org

Caroline Cox, Center for Environmental Health, 541-654-2626, caroline@ceh.org

Sarah Aird, Californians for Pesticide Reform, 415-971-4401, sarah@pesticidereform.org

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NEWS RELEASE**As Legislature Considers Bill to Protect Schoolchildren From Hazardous Pesticides, Report Highlights Green Pest Management for California Schools*****Green schools around the state demonstrate the health and cost advantages of adopting least toxic methods for controlling pests***

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Today, a diverse coalition of ecumenical, children's health, community and environmental groups released the report *Green Schools Within Reach: Moving Beyond the Healthy Schools Act of 2000* on the same day the California Senate considers updates to the law. *Green Schools Within Reach* provides an overview of current pest management practices in California schools and documents the significant steps many schools have taken to become healthier learning environments since 2000.

"We see stories of successful green schools across the state," said Paul Towers of Pesticide Watch Education Fund. "From the second largest school district in the nation, to the tiniest of districts, California schools have proven that using green pest management is feasible, more effective, and financially sound."

Green pest control, or integrated pest management (IPM), uses common sense and sound science to address pest problems. Calling for simple steps, such as mulching to control weeds or sealing cracks to prevent future pest infestations, IPM seeks the safest and most effective ways to prevent pests from becoming larger problems.

Unfortunately, not all California schools are making the grade. Schools still apply tens of thousands of pounds of often unnecessary pesticides each year and use outdated and inefficient pest control methods. Some schools continue to apply small amounts of the most dangerous pesticides, including those linked to cancer, hormone disruption and neurotoxicity. Even in very minute amounts, pesticides have a profound and serious impact on the health and development of children who are especially vulnerable during critical windows of development, when the impacts of pesticide exposure are amplified.

"We must do everything possible to prevent avoidable exposure of young children to pesticides that can lead to illness and long-term chronic disease or that negatively impact learning and brain development," said pediatric pulmonologist Dr. Roberta Kato.

"People think pesticides are safe because they're sold on store shelves and available on-line," concurred Sarah Aird of Californians for Pesticide Reform. "But pesticides are poisons – designed for no other reason but to kill. We can control pests safely and effectively without using toxic chemicals. State leaders should take steps to keep our children safe by banning the most dangerous pesticides from schools and promoting green solutions."

Recognizing the importance of limiting children's exposure to pesticides at schools, the US EPA recently launched a national initiative to promote expanded use of integrated pest management. California now has an opportunity to be a leader in this national effort.

"California was once leading the call to protect schoolchildren's health," said Caroline Cox of the Center for Environmental Health. "And we can be again. Schools and government leaders just need to work in partnership to make green pest management a priority."

Later today, the California Senate is holding a hearing to review the *Healthy Schools Act of 2011* (DeSaulnier), which would give California schools some of the nation's strongest protections against hazardous pesticides. *The Act* encourages schools to move away from pesticide reliance and promotes access to IPM tools already provided by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation's School IPM program.

Green Schools Within Reach: Moving Beyond the Healthy Schools Act of 2000 can be downloaded at www.PesticideReform.org.

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Report Authors:

Californians for Pesticide Reform is a statewide coalition of over 185 public interest groups dedicated to protecting human health and the environment from pesticide use.

Center for Environmental Health protects people from toxic chemicals and promotes business products and practices that are safe for public health and the environment.

Pesticide Watch Education Fund (PWEF) works side-by-side with citizen groups across Californian to prevent pesticide exposure, develop sustainable solutions, promote local farming, and build healthier communities.