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**CONTACT** Susan Lamontagne, 917.568.0969 or [susan@publicinterestmedia.com](mailto:susan@publicinterestmedia.com)

## **Scientists Brief Congress on How EPA Rules Affect Children's Health Rolling Back Air, Water, and Chemical Rules Jeopardizes Children's Future Health and Development, Scientists and Physicians Warn**

**Washington, DC** – Leading U.S. scientists in children's environmental health warned that children's health is in jeopardy from roll-backs in air, water, and chemical rules in a Capitol Hill briefing today. Their call to action to defend children's health was backed by nearly two dozen medical, health, and environmental advocacy groups.

"The direction we are headed in terms of air, water, and chemical policy is the wrong direction for the health of America's children," said former EPA scientist Tracey J. Woodruff, PhD, Professor and Director of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment. "In the race to eliminate EPA rules, there has been no consideration of the health and economic benefits of environmental regulations, which have been tremendous."

Benefits include: significant improvements in air quality, which prevented 160,000 early deaths, 1.7 million asthma attacks and 3.2 million lost school days in 2010 alone; transformation of numerous rivers and lakes that were unsafe for fishing and swimming to healthy water ways; and reduced childhood lead poisonings by more than 90% after lead was banned from paint and gasoline.

The legislative briefing kicked off the Children's Environmental Health Network's (CEHN) biennial research conference, April 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, during National Public Health Week.

"A very real health threat facing children today is climate change, so we need EPA's strong leadership on this now more than ever," said Frederica Perera, DrPH, PhD, Professor and Director of Columbia University's Center for Children's Environmental Health whose research linking air pollution to respiratory and neurodevelopmental problems in children prompted policy changes in New York City that further reduced air pollutants. "Rolling back rules on car, power plant, and methane emissions not only jeopardizes children's lungs, it puts their minds at risk too."

Speakers also expressed concern that children of color and those in low-income communities, who are already at the highest risk of living in or near contaminated sites and other sources of pollution, such as highways or factories, are at an even greater risk as protections and state and local programs funded by EPA are eliminated.

"Removing lead from paint and gasoline led to tremendous gains for children, but the story of lead remains a glaring example of what goes wrong while we vacillate over the rules and fail to eliminate exposures," said Adrienne Hollis, PhD, Esq, Director of Federal Policy at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. "For too many children, lead is still in their homes, in their drinking water, is taken home from

their parent's workplace, and is even on their playgrounds and athletic fields despite the fact that the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) says there is no safe level of lead for children."

Linda McCauley, RN, PhD, FAAN, Dean of Emory University School of Nursing and Director of Emory's Center for Children's Environmental Health, said that the public conversation is also ignoring how many chemicals remain unregulated. "If we can't do a good job on lead, which is something that is well-studied and well-documented in terms of poisoning children, what does that mean for the thousands of unregulated chemicals in the marketplace?" challenged McCauley, whose research focuses on how pesticides affect the health of children and workers. "We can and must do better and EPA's mission to protect health is vital to this."

Speakers pointed out that the EPA is currently in the process of setting rules to implement the newly updated Toxic Substances Control Act, which passed with bipartisan support. "It all comes down to whether EPA's rules favor corporate interests or whether they are fair to children's health," said Woodruff.

Pediatrician and Scientific Advisory Board Member of CEHN, Jerome A. Paulson, MD, FAAP, outlined how changes at EPA will directly undermine children's health. "Slashing EPA's budget and its rules will diminish the Agency's already limited ability to remediate toxic Superfund sites, many of which are located near where children live, play, and go to school," said Paulson, who is also Former Chair of the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Council on Environmental Health and Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and of Environmental and Occupational Health at George Washington University. "The inability to clean these sites means that children will continue to be exposed to endocrine-disrupting chemicals and other toxicants which may irrevocably alter their development and the health of future generations."

The briefing, which was attended by current and former EPA scientists, physicians, nurses, toxicologists, researchers and congressional staff, was spearheaded by the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment and CEHN. Supporting organizations include the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Public Health Association, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, Collaborative on Health and the Environment, Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health, Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Working Group, Healthy Babies Bright Futures, Healthy Schools Network, Moms Clean Air Force, Natural Resources Defense Council, Pesticide Action Network, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sierra Club, Silent Spring Institute, Trust for America's Health, and WE ACT for Environmental Justice. (List in formation.)

"The science shows EPA protects children's health and is good for business," said CEHN Executive Director Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH, "The bottom line is we need a strong, independent EPA that is fair to children's health."

**University California, San Francisco (UCSF) Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment** studies how environmental health hazards such as air pollution and toxic chemicals, affect pregnant women, children, and public health. [www.prhe.ucsf.edu](http://www.prhe.ucsf.edu)

**Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN)** is a national nonprofit organization working to protect all children from environmental health hazards and promote a healthier environment. [www.cehn.org](http://www.cehn.org)

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