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December 21, 2004

Dr. Lindell Ormsbee, Chair
Environmental Quality Commission
14 Reilly Road
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Dr. Ormsbee,

On behalf of Governor Ernie Fletcher, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to review the Environmental Quality Commission's report, *Children's Environmental Health in Kentucky*. The document is a valuable report of indicators that identify a number of illnesses that are of particular concern to the Governor and me.

As Secretary of the Environmental and Public Protection Agency, I am especially concerned about the potential linkages between many of these illnesses and the environment. The EPPC is committed to not only improving the quality of our natural environment, but also ensuring that our citizens are afforded safe and healthy homes, schools, and workplaces.

With encouragement and support from the Governor, executive branch agencies have undertaken a number of collaborative approaches in addressing issues that affect our health, safety and environment. For example, we have launched work groups that bring together state and local governments and stakeholders to address air toxics, domestic wastewater, and blackwater spills.

We believe many of our current programs can incorporate EQC's suggestions for a statewide action plan.

- The Division for Air Quality operates the successful Asbestos-in-Schools program that requires schools to inventory all asbestos-containing materials in their buildings and have a strategy for managing them safely. The program protects students from exposure to cancer-causing asbestos fibers. Additionally, the Division's requirement that schools use only properly trained and division-accredited asbestos professionals to assess and abate asbestos hazards helps to ensure safe management of asbestos materials in Kentucky's schools.

- High Performance School Buildings –Kentucky Department of Energy (KDOE) has conducted a High Performance Schools program. The KDOE has conducted annual workshops for school administrators, architects, and engineers. Of the 16 "building blocks" featured in the workshop presentations, at least three cover, indirectly or directly, issues associated with indoor air quality (IAQ).

- School Energy Managers – KDOE funds two full-time energy managers whose job is to promote energy efficiency in schools, including issues such as proper ventilation in classrooms. One energy manager is on staff at Fayette County Public Schools. The second is in the Kentucky Department Education's Division of Facilities Management and is in a position to make suggestions regarding energy efficiency and IAQ for all new construction and major renovation of the state's K-12 public schools.

- Biodiesel Program – KDOE provides a portion of the funding for the Kentucky Clean Fuels Coalition (KCFC), which, in the last two years has overseen the distribution of over $32,000 in KDOE funds to five school districts to "buy down" the cost of biodiesel fuel. Diesel fuel particulate emissions (soot) have been linked to lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, asthma episodes, hospitalizations for respiratory and cardiac conditions and hampered lung growth in children. Soot emissions are reduced by using B20, a mixture of 80 percent conventional diesel and 20 percent biodiesel from renewable sources such as soybean oil or used restaurant frying oils. In addition, approximately $20 million in grants for retrofits will be distributed as money coming from a national court settlement between EPA and one of the diesel engine makers.

- High Performance Homes Workshops and Energy Star Healthy Home– KDOE annually provides funding to the nationally recognized Southface Energy Institute to produce from six to ten High Performance Home one-day workshops. The workshops address IAQ and the control of moisture and mold in new home construction. The Healthy Home model promotes the federal ENERGY STAR® program and addresses issues such as mold and moisture control, radon, and indoor air quality. The exhibit was viewed by an estimated half-million people at the Kentucky State Fair and has been displayed at over 21 events in the last year.

- Green Schools Initiative – KDOE has begun working with a coalition of agencies and organizations in response to an initiative begun by Commissioner Gene Wilhoit of the Kentucky Department of Education and facilitated by the Kentucky Environmental Education Council. This Green Schools initiative will address, among other things, issues related to healthy and environmentally sustainable schools.

- Energy Curriculum – The National Energy Education Development (NEED) Project, a national non-profit partner funded, in part, under KDOE's High Performance Schools program, conducts an energy education curriculum program that teaches school children about the science of energy. While this contribution to environmental health impact is indirect, we recognize that no meaningful change can be achieved absent an informed and aware public.

- Division of Water (DOW) commitment to protection of the health of Kentucky's children, and all Kentuckians, includes: fish consumption advisories, water quality standards, permitting and regulation.

- EPPC has formed a cross cabinet task force to address specific questions on mercury as presented by EQC. This includes issues related to children's health and mercury.

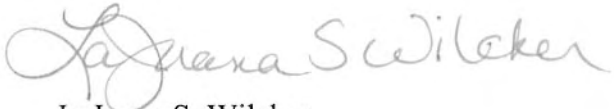
- The Division for Air Quality works to protect the health children in Kentucky from the harmful effects of air pollution through a combination of regulation, monitoring, modeling, inspection and enforcement, issuing permits, education, and outreach.

We recognize that there are many factors affecting children's health over which the cabinet has little or no control. Such factors include obesity rates, poverty, diet, and access to healthcare. As a physician, Governor Fletcher is sensitive to the myriad health issues affecting the wellbeing of the state's youth and has made specific commitments to address many of these. For example, the Healthy Kids Initiative will focus on ensuring that our children receive a healthy start in life. The initiative includes a screening during immunizations to determine whether a child lives in a house with potentially high levels of lead and direct parents on ways to address the problem.

With improved research and monitoring, we are fortunate to have more knowledge about a broad range of health issues that years ago may have gone unreported. The Commonwealth agencies are equally concerned about getting the best information available as well as providing accurate information to the public to make better decisions for the health children and all Kentuckians.

EPPC looks forward to continuing to collaborate with EQC on this and other efforts. Thank you for time and efforts.

Sincerely,



LaJuana S. Wilcher
Secretary

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