

NOV 28 2001 12:58 RESOLVE INC 202 338 1264 P.02/09

MUSC

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

GENERAL PEDIATRICS
326 CALHOUN STREET
2 CENTER • ROOMS 200-205
PO BOX 250106
CHARLESTON • SC 29425

(843) 953-8512
FAX (843) 953-8709

J. Routh Raigert, MD
Director

William T. Basco, MD
Paul M. Darden, MD
Walton L. Ector, MD
Kelly Havig-Lipke, MD
Melissa Howard Henshaw, MD
Michelle Lally, MD
Colleen Moran, MD
James R. Roberts, MD
Sere E. Schuh, MD

Patient Appointments
General Pediatrics Clinic
(843) 953-8444
Primary Care Clinic
(843) 953-8499

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Whitman:

On behalf of the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC), I want to congratulate and welcome you to your new and critically important position as Administrator of EPA. The CHPAC, chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), is comprised of approximately 40 members representing all levels of government and the public and private sectors (roster enclosed). In the past, we have provided recommendations to EPA on issues of science, data needs, economics, and other matters important to children's environmental health.

Your distinguished record as Governor of New Jersey amply demonstrates the importance you attach to ensuring that all children have affordable access to health care, that schools are stronger and provide a safe and healthy environment in which to learn, and that our children's environment is protected. This commitment will be essential in the fight to protect the children of the United States. Doubtless you are aware that too many children suffer severe learning disabilities from lead poisoning (almost 1 million), miss too much school (10 million days/year), and make too many emergency room visits because of uncontrolled asthma exacerbated by environmental triggers. Exposure to pesticides, outdoor and indoor air pollutants, and a host of other environmental risks threaten our children's ability to learn and to reach their full potential. Unfortunately, more often than not, the most severely impacted children are minorities and those living in disadvantaged rural and urban settings, who are also those with the fewest resources to overcome environmental threats.

We believe you can make a great impact on children's health by your leadership on this issue within the Administration. Your advocacy for improved scientific and economic data, for stronger partnerships with the States and localities, and for promotion of society-wide action on children's environmental health issues will make substantial and important improvements in the health of the nation's children.

From our perspective, we wish to suggest several areas that need your close and immediate attention.

First, we encourage you to exercise strong leadership in children's environmental health protection both domestically and internationally, where this issue is of increasing visibility and importance. Specifically, we encourage you to make children's health protection a high priority in the development and implementation of EPA policies. President Bush has stated that public health is a responsibility of government. We would suggest that you encourage the President to take a coordinated Administration-wide approach to children's public health issues which should include not only such matters as access to health care, nutrition, immunizations, etc. but also the importance of protecting children from environmental risks.

We note with pleasure that, at your confirmation hearing, you expressed the view that a strong Office of Children's Health Protection at EPA is important. Since the Committee has worked closely with this Office, we have come to believe that this small professional staff has made important contributions to the work of the EPA in the interests of children. For that reason, we hope you will maintain the Office of Children's Health Protection within the Office of the Administrator and strengthen its mandate and capabilities.

We also encourage you to support the interagency *President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children*. The interagency Task Force has promoted unprecedented levels of collaboration between EPA, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other departments and White House offices. Under the Task Force, interagency strategies for addressing the issues of asthma and lead have been developed but require strong commitment and follow-through to make these strategies a reality for millions of children.

Second, to improve children's environmental health we must accelerate the rate of scientific research. Unfortunately, too often decisions must be made without the scientific data so necessary for the development of sound policy. We strongly urge you to develop and make accessible to States, communities, public health officials, and parents the data they need to protect children. We must have better data on environmental pollutants, public health outcomes, and economic costs and benefits. For example, we urge you to move forward with activities, such as the Voluntary Children's Chemical Evaluation Program, to fill gaps in toxicity and exposure data on chemicals of significance to children. It is vitally important that consideration of children's health be included in all of your regulatory decisions. Federal research protocols and ongoing research must include and emphasize all stages of human development from pregnancy to adolescence.

Two recent EPA documents represent a good first step in developing and disseminating more and better information on children's environmental health risks. We urge you to support implementation of EPA's *Strategy for Research on Environmental Risks to Children* and continue to update periodically the recently published *America's Children and the Environment: A First View of Available Measures*.

Of utmost importance are rigorous, well-funded studies of the relationship between children's health and environmental factors. EPA and DHHS have established academic centers dedicated to children's environmental health research. These centers, the first of their kind, are uncovering critical new scientific findings as well as developing innovative collaborative research programs with communities. A continued strong emphasis on children's health research of near-term relevance to policy-makers, states and communities is of the utmost importance. In addition, a broad consortium of advocates from academia, government, industry and other sectors believe that a large, longitudinal cohort study of children and their environment is long overdue. We urge you to support such a study, now in the planning stage with leadership provided by DHHS and strong involvement from EPA.

Too often public health and environmental protection efforts are separate and inadequately coordinated and integrated. This Administration can make a significant difference by promoting the development and integration of data systems to permit States and communities to obtain, share, and use data on both environmental releases and public health outcomes. Essential to this effort will be broad-based Administration support for a comprehensive state and local tracking and monitoring system for environmentally related chronic diseases. While the Department of Health and Human Services is the appropriate Department to work with the States to establish such a system, your involvement and support will be critical to its funding and development.

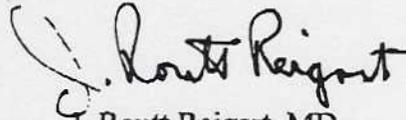
With your experience in state government, you certainly understand the need for strong partnerships with States. EPA must work closely with States to develop effective children's health protection programs, including developing better data and data systems, identifying key elements of successful programs and increased state funding. Our children's environmental health will only be improved by concerted action at the community level with strong State and Federal support.

We recommend that the EPA expand educational and outreach efforts to make information based on sound science more widely available to those who need it most, including populations that are disproportionately impacted, and national and community-based health care providers, education, environment, faith, and business organizations that are committed to improving children's health.

Finally, this Administration's education initiative to ensure that no child is left behind will be strengthened substantially if it includes a strong environmental component. With severe resource constraints, most schools lack the resources to address environmental threats to learning represented by exposure to asthma triggers, pesticides, and inadequate ventilation and other facility issues that permit small problems to become big ones. We urge you to work closely with the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services to ensure that schools are given adequate funding to protect children from environmental risks in the school setting.

The Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee is looking forward to working with you and we stand ready to assist you in any way possible.

Sincerely,



J. Routt Reigart, MD
Chair, Children's Health Protection
Advisory Committee

Enclosure