



Washington State Senate

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WA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Mr. Treuman Katz, Chair
Board Members
Washington State Board of Health
P.O. Box 47990
Olympia, WA 98504-7990

Dear Mr. Katz and Members of the Board of Health:

Thank you for tackling environmental health and safety in our state's schools. The paramount duty of our state is basic education. More important than teaching our kids a lesson at school is to ensure our children are safe while at school.

I am writing you to pledge my support in prioritizing state funding to implement the new rules for school health and safety which you are considering for adoption.

Among the new rules, I am pleased to see that EPA guidelines for dealing with contaminated drinking water and mold remediation in schools have been incorporated into the revised WAC 246-366A. These safeguards add to our increasing efforts (e.g. recent remediation of contaminated playground soil) to ensure that children are safe.

I understand that the proposed revision of WAC 246-366 has taken approximately 4 years of public process.

There is no doubt in my mind that health and safety budgets in schools have suffered as a result of chronic under-funding of schools. I agree with the quote from a Feb. 1, 2007 report on school facilities deficiencies by the Washington Association of Maintenance and Operations Administrators (WAMAO):

"More and more research is showing that this is a false economy and facilities should compete on the same priority level with instructional needs. The physical environment plays a major role in the health and safety of building occupants and has a measurable impact on the teaching and learning that occurs."

The State Board of Health has heard numerous testimonies on how unsafe schools have harmed schoolchildren and teachers. These testimonies clearly illustrate why we must increase safety rules and ensure compliance.

I encourage you to complete your important work on school environmental health and safety rules this fall, before the legislative session. It is imperative that legislators understand the technical requirements of WAC 246-366A, so that we can provide adequate funding for the implementation of these requirements. Adoption of WAC 246-366A by the State Board of Health will help instruct the Legislature on critical areas where action is needed.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to make sure that the health and safety of school children is addressed as a paramount duty of our state government.

Sincerely,



Eric Oemig
Senator

cc: Senator Jacobsen
Senator Kauffman
Senator Hobbs
Senator Eide
Senator
Senator McAuliffe
Senator Tom
Mark Cooper Ph.D