



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 8 2001

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Routt Reigart, M.D.
Medical University of South Carolina
Children's Hospital
P.O. Box 250853
Charleston, SC 29425

Dear Dr. Reigart:

Thank you for writing on behalf of the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee to advocate that children's health protection remain a priority in the development and implementation of EPA policies. I apologize for the delay in my response to your letter.

You and the Committee can be sure that children's health will remain among EPA's top priorities. I plan to retain the Office of Children's Health Protection (OCHP) within my immediate office under the direction of Ramona Trovato, and I have agreed to continue the Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, contingent upon concurrence from Governor Tommy Thompson, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. I share the hope that the productive collaboration between EPA and the other member agencies will continue to advance the improvement of children's health across the country.

EPA will continue to support the jointly funded DHHS-EPA Children's Research Centers, the Longitudinal Cohort Study of Environmental Effects on Child Health and Development, and the Voluntary Children's Chemical Evaluation Program. I appreciate the efforts of CPHAC to review and comment on *A Strategy for Research on Environmental Risks to Children*, and I will support implementation of the strategy.

Your letter raised the importance of working closely with our state partners to protect children by making widely available better data on environmental pollutants, public health outcomes, and economic cost and benefits. To expedite the creation and sharing of this data, EPA has partnered with state environmental agencies to create an Exchange Network – a system designed to facilitate the ability of government and all stakeholders to share environmental data over the Internet. The Exchange Network project underscores EPA's commitment to share useful and accurate environmental and public health data to protect children and to keep track of our progress. Working with our federal and state partners, EPA will continue to update *America's Children and the Environment: A First View of Available Measures*.

I agree there needs to be a comprehensive, nationwide disease-tracking system for chronic childhood diseases. Such a system could help us to understand more clearly the relationship between environmental risks and disease, identify who is most at risk for environmentally related illnesses, and guide our intervention and prevention efforts.

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While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention manages a nationwide system for tracking infectious diseases, no such system exists for tracking asthma, birth defects, childhood cancer, and other chronic conditions. Through the Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, I will have the opportunity to work with Governor Thompson and other interested agency leaders on this important need.

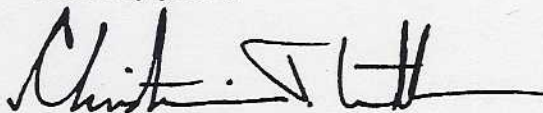
EPA will continue its support and involvement in efforts to incorporate the consideration of children into all aspects of decision-making at the federal, state, and local levels. We are supporting National Governors' Association efforts to broaden the state smart-growth community to include a public health perspective. We are behind state environment and health commissioners who will meet in August to determine how best to collaborate to reduce childhood asthma. The National Conference of State Legislatures is working to provide state legislatures with children's environmental health information, and EPA applauds such proposals as the creation of a tracking system for children's environmental health legislation.

EPA is continuing to forge partnerships to generate and disseminate information, expand outreach and education efforts, and help ensure that health professionals can prevent, identify, treat, and manage environmentally related illnesses in children. Our work with youth-based organizations promotes the incorporation of children's environmental health into the fabric of their organizations. We are proud of our recently launched media campaign to protect children from asthma attacks. In the near future, EPA will complete a five-part Spanish-language radio series on children's environmental health that is expected to reach 75 percent of the Spanish-speaking population.

I agree that any effective national education initiative should include a strong environmental component. Clearly, all children need and deserve a healthy environment in which to learn. Excellent programs have been developed at EPA to help schools, and many of our Regions are working hard with their state and local partners to integrate environmental health in schools. But we need to do more. Over the next several months, I plan to explore this issue to determine what EPA can do to help schools maintain healthier classrooms and other school facilities. I also plan to work closely on this issue with other federal departments, such as the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.

I thank you and your CHPAC colleagues for your determined efforts to help EPA protect our nation's children from environmental health threats. All my best.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Todd Whitman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Christine Todd Whitman