

*Maryland Department of Health
Maryland Department of the Environment*

*2023 Annual Report
Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council
Health-General Article, §13-1506(8)*

November 2023

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lieutenant Governor

Laura Herrera Scott
Secretary of Health

Serena C. McIlwain
Secretary of the Environment

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Background

The Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC) was established in 2000 pursuant to Chapter 585 of the Acts of 2000. CEHPAC advises the Governor and General Assembly on environmental issues that may pose a threat to children. Specifically, Health General §13–1506 requires CEHPAC to:

- (1) Review and comment on existing rules, regulations, and standards to ensure that the rules, regulations, and standards adequately protect the health of children from environmental hazards by taking into account the special vulnerability of children because of their developing physiology, and because their exposures, behaviors, and diets can differ greatly from those of adults;
- (2) (i) Review proposed regulations submitted to CEHPAC, and (ii) recommend to the promulgating unit measures that would avoid or minimize any negative impact that the proposed regulation may have on the health of children;
- (3) Comment on any proposed regulations that may be submitted by any other principal department of the Executive Branch during the public comment period if CEHPAC determines that the proposed regulation will have an adverse impact on children's health;
- (4) Gather and disseminate information to the public, including the research and medical communities, community-based organizations, schools, and State agencies, on how to reduce, treat, and eliminate children's exposures to environmental hazards to further the public's understanding of the environmental hazards that may potentially affect children;
- (5) Recommend uniform guidelines for State agencies to follow to help reduce and eliminate children's exposure to environmental hazards, especially in areas reasonably accessible to children;
- (6) Create and promote education programs, in partnership with health and environmental professionals, for parents, guardians, and caregivers of children that include information on: (i) the potential health effects of environmental hazards; (ii) practical suggestions on how to reduce children's exposure to environmental hazards; and (iii) any other relevant information to assist parents, guardians, and caregivers in protecting children from environmental hazards;
- (7) Provide input to the General Assembly on legislation that may impact environmental hazards that affect the health of children; and
- (8) Report to the Governor and the General Assembly annually on the activities of CEHPAC.

Mission

CEHPAC seeks to identify environmental hazards that may affect children's health and recommend solutions to those hazards through interdisciplinary problem solving and coalition building. CEHPAC's goals were developed in 2001 and are reaffirmed annually. They are to:

- Ensure that the rules, regulations, and standards of the State protect children from environmental hazards;
- Educate involved parties regarding the environmental hazards that impact children's health and the means to avoid those hazards; and
- Enable children in Maryland to grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

Membership

CEHPAC is composed of nineteen members, including those from the General Assembly, State agencies, private sector representatives, and parents with interest and expertise in the area of children’s health and the environment (see Appendix A for current CEHPAC membership).

CEHPAC Activities

CEHPAC convened in public session six times in 2023 as of this report, five times virtually and once in-person at the UM Laurel Medical Center in Laurel, MD. One additional CEHPAC meeting is planned for late 2023.

During the 2023 legislative session, CEHPAC discussed the following legislation:

Bill #	Bill Title
HB 0009	Equity in Transportation Sector - Guidelines and Analyses
HB 0079	Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023
HB 0147	Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program – Alterations and Establishment
HB 0299	Environment - Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody
HB 0310	Environment and Energy - Investment in Communities With Low- to Moderate-Income Households
HB 0473	Environment - Ambient Air Monitoring - Particulate and Fine Particulate Matter

CEHPAC has been actively engaged in various initiatives. The council expressed support for House Bill 9 Equity in Transportation Sector in a letter to the Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee, aiming to enhance equitable access to safe transit for the well-being of children. Additionally, CEHPAC highlighted its pivotal role to state agencies through a letter to the Office of Governmental Affairs. The council also endorsed proposed regulations for the Lead Poisoning Screening Program in a letter to the MDH Office of Regulations and Policy Coordination.

CEHPAC received regular reports from an IAQ & Schools Workgroup (made up of a mixture of CEHPAC members and interested individuals), which spent a considerable amount of effort

reviewing information indoor air quality, particularly in light of school indoor air quality concerns and science developed during the COVID-19 pandemic response. This group also focused on integrated pest management in schools, using information provided by the Maryland Department of Agriculture. During the March 21, 2023 CEHPAC meeting the Council moved the activity of the Workgroup back into the Council as a whole.

Recent reports, positions, and letters can be found on the CEHPAC website:

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/Pages/children-environmental-health.aspx>

In 2023, CEHPAC engaged in topics related to children’s environmental health, COVID-19, and school environments. Specifically, these topics included:

- Indoor air quality and ventilation in schools,
- Use of safer cleaning products in schools for COVID-19 cleaning procedures,
- Housing and health, and
- Asthma.

CEHPAC members continued to express interest in the work of the Department of Agriculture related to pesticides and integrated pest management in schools, including efforts by the Department of Agriculture to begin to update its guidance documents and technical manuals related to integrated pest management in schools, which were originally produced in 1999 and revised in 2006. CEHPAC members have expressed interest in contributing to or reviewing the revised documents as a part of the revision process.

CEHPAC also heard regular updates regarding the State’s progress addressing childhood asthma, climate change, and blood lead levels as it relates to children’s health.

Future Priorities

CEHPAC continues to work on the topics described above, as well as a number of new priorities for the coming year. These include continuations of previous activities (pesticides and other environmental hazards in schools), responding to emerging concerns (built environment and synthetic turf), and addressing concerns identified by CEHPAC’s members. CEHPAC is also making plans to revisit some of the issues and concerns identified in the 2008 CEHPAC report, “Maryland’s Children and the Environment” (available at <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/EH/Shared%20Documents/CEHPAC/Report-2008-FINAL.pdf>), with the intention of updating the document for publication.

CEHPAC is also focused on filling the two vacancies among its members.

Conclusion

The issue of children’s environmental health continues to be a major concern, and CEHPAC’s role is to provide education and advice regarding these issues to policy makers and the public in Maryland. CEHPAC will continue to review proposed regulations and legislation to protect

Maryland’s children from environmental health hazards. CEHPAC will also maintain its current efforts to educate its members and other interested parties on the growing body of knowledge related to children’s environmental health.

Appendix A. CEHPAC Membership 2023

Maryland Senate Senator Dawn Gile	Licensed Healthcare Professional 1) Benjamin A. Gitterman, MD 2) Laura Allen, MA, MS, RN
Maryland House of Delegates Delegate Mary Lehman	Representative from an academic institution Kristen Rawlett, Ph.D, FNP-BC
Maryland Department of Health (Chair) Clifford Mitchell, MS, MD, MPH	Parent or Guardian Jovonne Walker
Maryland Department of the Environment (Vice Chair) Devon Dodson	Environmental Epidemiologist Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH
Department of Agriculture Kelly Love	Economist Paul Ferraro, Ph.D
Maryland State Department of Education Alicia Mezu, MSN/Ed, BSN, BS, RN	Environmental Toxicologist Megan Latshaw, Ph.D
Department of Human Services Shawnett Mills, LCPC	Maryland Association of Counties Dianna Abney, MD FAAP
Department of Housing and Community Development Jack Daniels	Private Industry Vacant
The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services Christine Fogle	Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities Vacant

Appendix B. 2023 CEHPAC Products

- Letter to Maryland Department of Agriculture with Questions on Pesticides and Integrated Pest Management (10/4/23)
- Letter to Legislative Liaisons on Role of CEHPAC in Reviewing Regulations (7/7/23)

- **Documents Submitted to the Council**

(These include documents submitted to the Council by other parties for review or consideration, but are not products of the Council and are not necessarily endorsed or approved by the Council).

- **CEHPAC IAQ & Schools Workgroup Report**
- **CEHPAC IAQ & Schools Workgroup Status Report**
- CEHPAC's products are available on the CEHPAC website:
<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/Pages/children-environmental-health.aspx>