

OUR KIDS CAN'T BREATHE IN OUR COMMUNITIES: NEW REPORT PROVIDES

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For Immediate Release

Contact:

Dan Lavoie 510-418-1208 (cell)
dan@policylink.org

WHY OUR KIDS CAN'T BREATHE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

New report provides blueprint to fight the environmental triggers
 of childhood asthma

May 13, 2008 -- Our homes, schools, playgrounds and neighborhoods are riddled with preventable asthma triggers that leave millions of children gasping for air. But a new report released today by PolicyLink and The California Endowment lays out a plan for what we all can do to make our children's air safer and healthier.

The new report, [Breathing Easy from Home to School: Fighting the Environmental Triggers of Childhood Asthma](#), provides a blueprint for dramatically reducing the community factors that contribute to asthma development and spark asthma attacks. The full report is available at www.policylink.org/breathingeasy.

The asthma epidemic is clearly a crisis, affecting more than 10 million children nationwide - about one in every seven school-aged kids. In some communities - particularly low-income communities and communities of color - as many as one in four children suffer from asthma.

Kids in these high-risk communities are exposed daily to countless environmental hazards: exhaust-spewing cars, trucks and buses on nearby highways; unregulated industrial plants; and dilapidated schools with poor ventilation and mold.

"Too many kids in poor communities are forced to breathe unhealthy air from the moment they get up to the moment they go to sleep," said Judith Bell, president of PolicyLink. "We must eliminate the environmental asthma triggers that are leaving millions of our children gasping for air."

Fixing these problems will require the concerted partnership of community organizations and policymakers. The report builds on the innovative efforts to combat asthma triggers by more than a dozen organizations nationwide.

"All of California's kids should be able to grow and learn in healthy environments," said Robert K. Ross, M.D., president and CEO of The California Endowment. "Unfortunately, children residing in low-income

communities are often exposed to unhealthy levels of environmental toxins not found in more affluent communities. It is essential we ensure all neighborhoods are free of harmful chemicals and other pollutants that exacerbate asthma symptoms."

Building off the work of community groups, the report suggests a host of policy and practice changes to significantly reduce childhood asthma, including:

- Using popular global warming legislation to push broader air quality issues.
- Forcing systematic inspections of rental housing. Many renters, especially undocumented workers, fear retaliation if they report unhealthy living conditions.
- Encouraging the construction of "asthma-safe" homes. These voluntary housing codes ensure key asthma triggers are limited.
- Rehabilitating schools that have become havens for mold, dust and poor ventilation.
- Encouraging schools to use "green" cleaning products and non-toxic pest control methods.

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works. PolicyLink work is guided by the belief that those closest to the nation's challenges are central to the search for solutions. With offices in Oakland, New York, New Orleans and Los Angeles, PolicyLink is a leader in the national equity movement. For more information, visit www.policylink.org.

The California Endowment's mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. For more information, visit www.calendow.org.

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"Fred Blackwell Speaks On Blacks Being Left Out of Urban Development," The Loop 21

"HUD Awards Grant to Oakland to Create Better Community," San Francisco Chronicle

"Innovative Policies Are Essential to Save Men Who Are at Risk," The Sacramento Bee

"On Jobs and Safety Net, Lawmakers Must Focus on Hard-Hit Minorities," CNN.com

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