

Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council

Fiscal Year 2025 Summation of Activities

Health-General Article, §13-1506(8)

**Maryland Department of Health
Maryland Department of the Environment**

November 2025

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Governor

Aruna Miller
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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 Article §13–1506, Annotated Code of Maryland, 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, and members appointed by the Governor. The private industry membership position is vacant. Those serving in the academic institution and parent/guardian positions are seeking replacements (see Appendix A for current CEHPAC membership).

Subha Chandar, MPH, was appointed by the Secretary of Health as the new Maryland Department of Health (MDH) designee and Chair of CEHPAC in August 2024. Ms. Chandar is the Deputy Director of the Environmental Health Bureau at MDH and continues serving as the Chair.

In May 2025, Frederick Banks, DPA, was appointed as the Vice Chair of CEHPAC, representing the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Dr. Banks is the Program Manager of the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program in the Land and Materials Administration of MDE.

CEHPAC Activities

CEHPAC convened in public session eight times in fiscal year (FY) 2025, continuing its work to advance children's environmental health through public engagement, policy discussions, and interagency collaboration. Meetings featured presentations from state agencies, local governments, advocates, and members of the public, and highlighted both persistent and emerging environmental health issues for Maryland's children. Sessions included one joint meeting with the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) on November 19, 2024. The joint meeting was held to align shared priorities and discuss environmental health and justice issues in Maryland. Key topics included updates on the Curtis Bay coal facility permit, collaborative efforts on lead poisoning prevention and climate resilience, and legislative priorities for 2025. The meeting emphasized cross-agency coordination, community engagement, and strategies to strengthen protections for children's health and overburdened communities.

During the 2025 legislative session, CEHPAC tracked and discussed several bills with potential impact on children's environmental health, including:

- HB 114 – Revisions to Pesticide Applicator's Law (*Passed; effective October 1, 2025*) – Requires certification and detailed recordkeeping for all users of restricted-use pesticides, closing gaps and improving accountability in sensitive environments such as schools.
- HB 386 / SB 345 – PFAS Restrictions in Biosolids and Pesticides (*Did not pass*) – Sought to limit the use of PFAS-containing biosolids and pesticides.
- HB 1342 – Notification of Pesticide Applications Near State Property (*Did not advance*) – Would have required public notification prior to pesticide use near state-owned property such as schools and parks.

In addition, CEHPAC is represented on the Air Quality Control Advisory Council (AQCAC), where the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) Amendment was discussed. This regulation will require truck manufacturers to increase sales of zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in Maryland, with phased implementation beginning in 2027. The Maryland Department of the Environment presented on the ACT regulations outlining the challenges of infrastructure upgrades; high vehicle costs for medium and heavy-duty trucks; and coordination with Maryland

DOT and energy agencies on grid impact. CEHPAC representation in AQCAC ensures that the health impacts of diesel emissions on children are considered in the rulemaking process.

CEHPAC's work continued to focus on improving environmental conditions in schools. Priority topics in FY 2025 included:

- Improving indoor air quality (IAQ) and ventilation in schools;
- Promoting the adoption and use of safer cleaning products;
- Encouraging pesticide alternatives through integrated pest management (IPM) practices;
- Supporting transparency in pesticide use data to inform public awareness and policy.

As part of this commitment, in August 2024 CEHPAC sent a letter to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) regarding the use of pesticides in Maryland schools (Appendix B-1). The letter urged MDA to create a public, searchable database of pesticide application records, improve reporting mechanisms, and collaborate with CEHPAC and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to strengthen IPM training and implementation. In its October 2024 response, MDA emphasized that it enforces both State and federal pesticide regulations, conducts routine IPM inspections in every county public school system, and maintains that all pesticide records are already accessible upon request at individual schools (Appendix B-2). MDA noted that a centralized reporting database is not feasible due to resource limitations and suggested that CEHPAC discuss record availability and electronic reporting options with MSDE. MDA also reaffirmed exemptions for antimicrobial pesticides and highlighted that no injuries related to school pesticide applications have been reported in over two decades. Both the Council's letter and MDA's formal response are available on the CEHPAC website, and are included as appendices (Appendices B-1 and B-2).

In July 2025, CEHPAC sent a letter to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Superintendent, Dr. Thomas Taylor, expressing concerns about reports of students at Poolesville High School experiencing symptoms consistent with exposure to poor air quality and fumes during ongoing construction inside the school (Appendix B-3). The Council, echoing recommendations from the Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and the Environment (MACCHE), urged MCPS to prioritize children's health by scheduling major construction activities outside of the school year and adopting practices aligned with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Sensible Guide for Healthier School Renovations* (2016) (Appendix B-4). In response, Dr. Taylor affirmed MCPS's commitment to student safety but questioned the factual basis of some of the reported incidents, describing them as anecdotal (Appendix B-5). He also expressed concern about the financial implications of limiting construction to periods when schools are not in session and inquired whether CEHPAC had funding mechanisms to support such recommendations. Dr. Taylor reiterated MCPS's appreciation for the CEHPAC's partnership and openness to continued dialogue on protecting children's environmental health. Both the CEHPAC's letter and the Superintendent's response are available on the CEHPAC website, and are included as appendices (Appendices B-3 and B-5).

These letters and approved minutes are available online along with previous years' correspondence, reports, and positions:

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

Throughout the year, CEHPAC also discussed environmental justice, disproportionate exposures, overburdened communities, and other children's environmental health topics. For example:

- PFAS contamination in water, food, and consumer products, and its disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations;
- School construction activities and the potential for indoor environmental quality hazards;
- Legislative and regulatory developments related to lead poisoning prevention and cumulative environmental impact permitting;
- Opportunities to revisit and update CEHPAC's statutory charge and the 2013 *Children's Environmental Health and Protection Report*.

The Council received ongoing updates on statewide efforts to address childhood asthma and elevated blood lead levels from state agencies including MDH and MDE. It also continued its standing dialogue with the public who provided comments and input on pesticide application transparency, indoor air quality, climate change impacts, and emerging environmental health risks.

Future Priorities

CEHPAC will continue to prioritize the topics of indoor air quality, pesticide use, and other environmental hazards in Maryland schools, while also addressing broader environmental health threats such as PFAS contamination and lead exposure. CEHPAC remains committed to responding to emerging concerns in the built environment, the impacts of climate change on children's health, and emphasizing environmental justice and reducing disproportionate exposures in overburdened communities. CEHPAC will review data and highlight priorities with the new Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council created by Governor Moore's recent Executive Order 01.01.2025.17, "Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity (VOICE)."¹

Additional priorities for FY 2026 include:

- Collaborating with MDA and MSDE to improve pesticide application transparency and strengthen IPM implementation.
- Supporting legislative and regulatory efforts to reduce harmful exposures, including continued engagement on PFAS, indoor air quality standards, and topics raised through CEHPAC's representation on AQCAC.
- Reviewing CEHPAC's statutory charge to ensure alignment with current priorities and the successes and challenges since the 2013 *Children's Environmental Health and Protection Report*.
- Expanding collaboration with the CEJSC and other cross-sector partners to address cumulative environmental impacts on children's health.
- Growing communications including health providers, policy makers, and the general public about environmental health issues that incorporate data and resources.
- Enhancing understanding of the children's environmental health protection landscape of organizations and activities in Maryland to inform CEHPAC's priorities.
- Filling existing Council vacancies to strengthen expertise, representation, and engagement.

¹[https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/89/EO%2001.01.2025.17%20Valuing%20Opportunity,%20Inclusion,%20and%20Community%20Equity%20\(VOICE\)_Accessible.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/89/EO%2001.01.2025.17%20Valuing%20Opportunity,%20Inclusion,%20and%20Community%20Equity%20(VOICE)_Accessible.pdf)

Conclusion

Children's environmental health remains a critical concern for Maryland, requiring proactive and coordinated action to safeguard the health and well-being of the State's youngest residents. CEHPAC plays a vital role in advising policymakers, state agencies, and the public on strategies to prevent and reduce environmental health hazards affecting children.

The Council will continue to review and provide input on proposed regulations and legislation, advocate for evidence-based protections, and ensure that environmental justice considerations remain central to policy discussions. CEHPAC will also maintain its commitment to educating members, stakeholders, and the public on the evolving science, regulatory developments, and best practices in children's environmental health — ensuring that Maryland remains at the forefront of protecting its most vulnerable populations.