AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 413
(A-18)

Introduced by: Medical Student Section
Subject: Improving Safety and Health Code Compliance in School Facilities
Referred to: Reference Committee D
(Shannon Kilgore, MD, Chair)

Whereas, Children are vulnerable to environmental exposures as a consequence of disproportionate food, water, and oxygen consumption relative to body size, and due to lower breathing zones, where certain air pollutants such as mercury tend to accumulate, and

Whereas, In the United States, outstanding capital investment and deferred renovations of public school buildings are estimated at over $322 billion, thereby placing students at significant risk as identified facility shortcomings are left untreated;

Whereas, The Environmental Protection Agency “does not routinely inspect and enforce...regulations in schools,” with only some specific acts mandating direct EPA intervention in school settings; and

Whereas, At least 39 states are known to have schools that supply drinking water with unsafe levels of lead, with “no scientific or practical reason” to assume that this characterization does not in fact apply to every state in America, and

Whereas, Ninety percent of the schools in America receive water from a local utility rather than private wells, thereby exempting them from EPA guidelines and regulations; and

Whereas, In 2006, only 51.4% of schools maintained a formal Indoor Air Quality management program, a number that has fallen in recent years; and

Whereas, In a landmark study examining Boston Public Schools, “approximately 85% of Boston Public Schools reported leaks or water stains, 36% reported visible mold growth, 63% reported overt pest signs, 83% reported repairs needed, and 61% reported improper chemical storage,” a reality far from uncommon in both urban and rural settings;¹³ and

Whereas, Children in “poor health” are far more likely to receive B’s, C’s, D’s, and F’s compared to children in “excellent/very good health;”¹⁴ and

Whereas, Minority students and already vulnerable populations are more likely to attend underfunded schools with heightened risk of toxic exposures, along with heightened rates of neighborhood violence, both which negatively impact physical and mental health;¹⁵,¹⁶,¹⁷,¹⁸ and

Whereas, The 2016 School Health Policies and Practices Study conducted by the CDC highlights current shortcomings in school safety inspections, including substandard assessment and remediation of lead, PCB, and mold exposures, indoor air quality, and chemical exposure through the use of unsafe cleaning products;¹⁹ and

Whereas, As identified by the Committee to Review and Assess the Health and Productivity Benefits of Green Schools, schools that truly prioritize overall health and performance must establish specific criteria for dryness, indoor air quality, thermal comfort, frequent maintenance/repair, cleanliness, and quietness,²⁰ therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association support the development and implementation of standardized, comprehensive guidelines for school safety and health code compliance inspections (New HOD Policy); and be it further

RESOLVED, That our AMA support policies aiding schools in meeting said guidelines, including support for financial and personnel-based aid for schools based in vulnerable neighborhoods (New HOD Policy); and be it further

RESOLVED, That our AMA support creation of a streamlined reporting system for school facility health data potentially through application of current health infrastructure. (New HOD Policy)

Fiscal note: not yet determined

Received: 04/26/18

RELEVANT AMA POLICY: Providing Medical Services through School-Based Health Programs H-60.991; Childhood Anaphylactic Reactions D-60.976; Antidepressant Health H-60.981; Diagnosis and Treatment of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in School-Age Children H-60.950; School-Based and School-Linked Health Centers H-60.921; Quality of School Lunch Program H-150.952; Health Instruction and Physical Education in Schools H-170.999; Improving Nutritional Value of School Foods Available in Primary and Secondary Schools H-150.971; Improving the Health of Black and Minority Populations H-350.972; Improving 4-H Children’s Health Through Community Garden Programs (H-350.929); Training in the Principles of Population-Based Medicine H-450.985; Green Initiatives and the Health Care Community H-150.944; Integrating Content Related to Public Health and Preventive Medicine Across the Medical Education Continuum D-295.327; Stewardship of the Environment H-135.973


