

May 15, 2007

Dr. Kristina Thayer
NIEHS
Thayer@niehs.nih.gov

Re: Comments on the NIEHS Review Panel Report on the Children's Environmental Health Centers

Dear Dr. Thayer:

The Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma (LBACA) is a community-based organization that focuses on preventing and treating asthma and respiratory problems of children in the communities of Long Beach, Wilmington, and Carson, California. We are fortunate to be a key community partner in the Children's Environmental Health Center (USC/UCLA) based at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. We participate in the Center's CBPR research project and we have also benefited from programs sponsored by the Center's community outreach core.

As part of our work with the Center at USC, we have developed "neighborhood assessment teams," teams of volunteers who are trained to follow protocols on how to count traffic volumes and monitor air pollution, using P-Traks, which measure the number of ultrafine particles in the air. We have worked closely with the CPBR research project, directed by Dr. Rob McConnell, and share a staff person whom we call our Study Liaison to work on the community-based study. With guidance from the Community Outreach and Translation Core (COTC), directed by Andrea Hricko, and COTC staff, our LBACA staff and team of volunteer "moms" have developed expertise in understanding air pollution research results, so that we are now comfortable testifying about scientific studies at policy hearings.

Our work with the USC Center has, in fact, led to additional foundation funding, in partnership with the COTC. In addition, we will be co-sponsoring a national meeting in the fall for 400 participants on solutions for reducing health and community impacts from the L.A. and Long Beach marine ports – the largest ports in the U.S. and a major environmental health problem in Southern California. On the "ports" issue, without the Children's Center and its faculty doing research and disseminating it, much less progress would have been made toward cleaning the air in the past five years.

We have reviewed the recommendations in the report issued by the Review Panel that NIEHS convened to evaluate the Children's Centers. Center research about asthma and other respiratory health problems has been very valuable for our community members. Through the Center, we have been able to learn about the way scientific studies are done and to understand what the Center's research findings mean. In addition, through working with the Center, we have been able to bring about policy changes that will help to protect our residents' health, such as the development of the first joint Clean Air Action Plan for the Ports of L.A. and Long Beach.

We are concerned about the recommendations in the report, which seem to indicate a shift toward laboratory science and away from population studies. We urge you to continue funding environmental health epidemiologic research through the Children's Centers, to continue funding

community-based participatory research, and to continue the invaluable COTCs in each Center. Communities need these important functions to continue.

Submitted by:

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