



Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice

Centro de Acción Comunitaria y Justicia Ambiental

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May 15, 2007

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

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

Dear Dr. Thayer:

The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice is a community partner of the NIEHS/EPA funded Children's Environmental Health Center based at Keck School of Medicine, USC. CCAIEJ is a nonprofit organization based in Riverside, CA, dedicated to finding opportunities for cooperative, participatory solutions to environmental health problems.

This letter is to offer the strong support of CCAIEJ in the continuation of the Children's Environmental Health Centers, which are so critical to community environmental health. The work of the USC-based Children's Environmental Health Center scientists and of its outreach program has been an amazing asset for our work in the Inland Valleys of Southern California, east of Los Angeles. That is why in 2003 our organization gave an unprecedented four of its annual "Dr. Zweig Memorial Awards" to three of the Center's scientists and its outreach director. We honored them for their important epidemiologic research on the health effects of air pollution and for helping to educate both residents and government officials about the health risks children face when exposed to high levels of air pollution.

Our community has the highest levels of particulate air pollution in the United States. We rely on the USC Center scientists to help understand how serious the health impacts are. And we rely on both the scientists and the Center's outreach program to educate our residents – and our elected officials – about needed policy changes. The USC Community Outreach and Translation Core (COTC) of its Children's Center has been a major contributor to having elected officials in the state better understand the health impacts of ports and "goods movement" – moving cargo containers via diesel conveyances to their destinations. This has become one of the most serious environmental health problems in our state and it is now looming as a national issue, as international trade increases.

"bringing people together to improve our social and natural environment"

As a community partner, we also fully collaborate with the CBPR research project directed by Dr. Rob McConnell. In fact, we have a staff person who works between our two organizations on this important research study.

We were very concerned to read the Review Panel Report on the Children's Centers, which suggests a move away from population studies of children's health to laboratory science. We disagree with that approach and encourage continued funding of epidemiologic studies. We are also extremely concerned that there appear to be cutbacks or even curtailment of the critical community outreach and translation function on which we and so many others have come to rely for accurate scientific information.

We urge NIEHS to continue to fund large studies of children's health as part of these Centers, to continue the CBPR projects, and to fully support the community outreach and translation effort.

Thanks for considering our comments.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the printed name below.

**Penny Newman,
Executive Director,
Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, Riverside, CA**