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Testimony before the Education Committee on
HB 6496, an Act Concerning Green Cleaning in Schools

Good Afternoon, I am **Kathleen Henry** and I am here to testify in support of An Act Concerning Green Cleaning in Schools. I also support the positions of the **Connecticut Foundation of Environmentally Safe Schools**.

I am a grandmother of three as well as a person who has experienced asthma and educated others about it for years. I am also a leader with the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice. Through this work I have learned that green cleaner works and is healthier for people and the environment. I have adopted the use of green products in my home and I find that my breathing has improved. In many cases, green products are actually less expensive than the products containing hazardous chemicals that I used to use.

I am concerned that children in all of our school be safe from exposure to toxic cleaning products.

Schools are very densely occupied spaces which may have poor indoor air quality. Children both eat and breathe more pound for pound than do adults. This makes children especially vulnerable to the poor indoor air quality to which the use of toxic cleaning products contributes.

When cleaning products that contain such chemicals of concern as volatile organic compounds, phthalates, formaldehyde, etc., are used in schools the result can be health effects such as asthma, rashes, headaches, and dizziness. More serious long term health effects are also linked to exposure to these substances: cancer, reproductive disorders, or damage to the liver, kidneys, or eyes. Such chemical that evaporate into the air remain in the air for hours and can bring on coughing, or difficulty breathing, even vomiting.

Children in our urban areas already suffer from high rates of asthma. Asthma is the chronic illness that most contributes to missed school time for children. Our children need to get the benefit of all their time in school to advance their educations and prepare them for life. Our healthcare systems are overburdened with the cost of emergency room visits now. Adopting Green Cleaning methods can reduce these costs.

I have been part of a group of citizen leaders from Hartford who worked to pass resolutions at the City and Board of Education levels to require green cleaning in schools and municipal buildings. Workers there have received trainings and health has improved as a result of the city's leadership on this issue.