

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS**  
1<sup>ST</sup> Regular Session

House Bill No. **1568**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	
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Introduced by **Congressman Alfredo D. Vargas III**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The United States' (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), had made public the appalling revelation that indoor air pollution is one of the most pressing personal health concerns in their country.

On the other hand, the Philippine Constitution, Article 2, Section 13 expresses that:

The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and private affairs.

The abovementioned EPA study has some disturbing facts, which tends to negate the intent or purpose of our Constitutional provision.

The EPA revealed that residues of more than 400 toxic chemicals have been identified in human blood and fat tissue. Some of these toxic chemicals have been found in household products and food.

EPA's Office of Research and Development's created a Total Exposure Assessment Methodology (TEAM) which made a study which found :

- 1) That levels of about a dozen common organic pollutants to be two to five times higher indoors than outside. This is regardless of whether the homes were in rural or highly industrial areas.
- 2) That people using products containing organic chemicals, can expose themselves and others to very high pollutant levels, and
- 3) That elevated concentrations can persist in the air long after the activity is finished.

Dangerous ingredients such as caustics or solvents are present in ordinary household cleaning products. When improperly used, stored or disposed, they become health hazards. Burns and severe damage to skin and eyes can be caused by caustic

chemicals like those in oven cleaners (lye, sodium hydroxide), drain cleaners, scouring powders, or bleach.

Inhalation or accidental drinking of solvents (fast-drying substances that dissolve another substance) can be harmful, even fatal. Cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders, and liver and kidney problems, may be caused by long-term exposure to some solvents. Among those household items containing solvents are furniture polish, silver cleaner, paint remover and wood floor wax.

Even pleasant-smelling cleaning products such as laundry detergents, all-purpose sprays, dish soaps and scrub sponges have ingredients which are dangerous to health.

University of Washington had made a study revealing that many scented cleaning products possess mystery chemicals not listed on their labels but are toxic to health. The University's researchers tested several consumer cleaning products and discovered that 25 of the most frequently used scented products has an average of 17 hazardous chemicals.

Also posing a danger to health are Volatile Organic Compound (VOCs) which are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids, since they include chemicals, some of which are feared to have short- and long- term adverse health effects. Concentration of many VOCs are consistently higher indoors than outdoors.

VOCs are emitted by thousands of products which include cleaning supplies. Organic chemicals are also used as ingredients in household products. Many cleaning, disinfecting, cosmetic, degreasing, and hobby products have organic solvents. These products can release organic compounds they are used, or even when they are stored.

Especially vulnerable to these are our children who are still developing their basic body systems and are thus more physically sensitive. The children's internal organs, respiratory and immune systems, and brains, are not yet fully developed.

Canadian statistics are frightening:

- 1) for children admitted to hospitals, respiratory illness is now the leading cause;
- 2) asthma for children has increased by 400 percent.
- 3) After injuries, cancer is now the No. 1 cause of death in children between the ages of five and nine.

There is obviously a need to mandate the use of safe cleaning products in schools if we are to protect our children from harm and/or illness.

This piece of legislation is a response to this need. By requiring the use of safe cleaning products in school, it hopes to protect the health of students, custodial staff and all other workers in our school buildings.

  
**ALFREDO D. VARGAS III**

**REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**

*House of Representatives*

Quezon City

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS**

1st Regular Session

**1568**

**HOUSE BILL NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

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**AN ACT**

**MANDATING THE USE OF SAFE CLEANING PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF STUDENTS**

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Safe Cleaning Products in School Act.”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to promote and protect the physical well-being of the youth recognizing their vital role in nation-building.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the term:

(1) “Air freshener” means an aerosol spray, liquid deodorizer, plug-in product, parade-chlorobenzene block, scented urinal screen, or other product used to mask odors or freshen the air in a room.

(2) “Antimicrobial pesticides” means a pesticide that is intended to:

(A). disinfect, sanitize, reduce, or mitigate growth or development of a microbiological organism; or

(B). protect inanimate objects, industrial processes or systems, surfaces, water, or other chemical substances from contamination, fouling, or deterioration caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozon, algae or slime.

(3). “Cleaning product” means an institutional compound intended for routine cleaning, including antimicrobial pesticides, general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, glass cleaners, carpet cleaners, floor care products, and hand soaps.

(4). "Property manager" shall refer to the employee of a school who has supervisory and decision making authority with regards to the sanitary and physical condition of school property, including authority over cleaning product purchases.

(5). Disinfectant" means substances or mixtures of substances used on hand inanimate surfaces and objects to destroy or irreversibly inactive infectious fungi and bacteria but not necessarily their spores.

(6). "Environmentally preferable cleaning products" means a cleaning product that has a less negative effect on human health and the environment when compared to competing products serving the same purpose.

(7). "Green cleaning" means a practice that includes the use of a cleaning product certified as environmentally preferable by an independent third party entity, best practices that follow accepted management standards and improve indoor air quality, and equipment that facilitates effective cleaning.

(8) (A) "Independent third party" refers to a nationally recognized organization that has developed a program for the purpose of certifying environmentally preferable cleaning products.

The certification program shall:

- (i) define a manufacturer's certification fees;
- (ii) identify any potential conflicts of interest;
- (iii) base certification on considerations of human health and safety, ecological toxicity, other environmental impacts, and resource conservation as appropriate product and its packaging on a life-cycle basis;
- (iv) develop certification standards in an open, public and transparent manner that involves the public and key stakeholders;
- (v) periodically revise and update the standards to remain consistent with the current research about the impacts of chemicals on human health;
- (vi) monitor and enforce the standards for the purpose of certification, and have the authority to inspect the manufacturing facility and periodically to do so, and have a registered or legally protected certification mark; and

- (vii) make the standards easily accessible to purchasers and manufacturers; or

(B) In the alternative, "Independent third party" means any organization otherwise deemed by the DENR to satisfactory assess and certify environmentally preferable cleaning products. In the absence of an independent third party, the certification shall be undertaken by the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR.

(9) "School" shall refer to preschools, primary and secondary schools both public and private.

SECTION 4. *Environmentally preferable cleaning product.* – A school shall ensure that only environmentally preferable cleaning products are used to clean their premises. The property manager shall use cleaning products certified as environmentally preferable by an independent third party as defined in Section 4 of this Act.

SECTION 5. *Exceptions.* – A school may temporarily use non-environmentally preferable disinfectant in the following cases:

- (1) Blood, body fluids, or fecal soiling is present on any surface; or
- (2) The Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources makes a case-specific determination that failure to use environmentally preferable disinfectants would create a risk to public health and safety.

SECTION 6. *Air fresheners.* – A school shall not purchase or allow the use of air fresheners in its premises.

SECTION 7. *Creation of a school environmental health website.* – The Secretaries of Environment and Natural Resources, Health, and Education shall jointly create and jointly update as necessary an electronic school environmental health clearinghouse site on the website of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), including diagnostic checklists and searchable databases. This website shall include:

- (1) Information on materials and practices in common use in school operations and construction that may compromise indoor air quality or negatively impact human health;
- (2) Information on potential health problems associated with these materials, with specific reference to children's vulnerability;
- (3) Information on integrated pest management and alternatives to chemical pest control;

(4) Information on methods to reduce or eliminate exposure to potentially hazardous substances in schools, including the following:

(A) A list of preventive management options, such as supplies, building equipment, and materials and finishing; and

(B) A list of nontoxic or least toxic office and classroom supplies, building equipment, and materials and furnishings; and

(C) A list of environment health criteria that schools may use a decision making tool when determining what materials to purchase or use in school construction or operations.

(D) Information on environmentally preferable cleaning products certified by an independent third party including a list of these products and procedures for using them.

SECTION 8. Review. – The Secretaries of Environment and Natural Resources, Education and Health shall:

(1) Review the information on the school environmental health information clearinghouse at least twice yearly, and update it whenever significant development occurs.

(2) At the request of school officials, assist school environmental health coordinators to identify potential sources of environmental pollution in the school, and make recommendations on how to alleviate any problems.

(3) Annually, organize a school environmental workshop for school environment health coordinators and school administrators, and an annual training for school maintenance and property staff. Each workshop and training shall include instruction on green cleaning practices. The department shall issue certificates of training to participants who successfully complete the workshops.

(4) Publicize the availability of information through the school environmental health clearinghouse.

(5) Provide information and referrals to members of school communities who contact the school environmental health clearinghouse with hazardous exposure and indoor air concerns.

(6) Assist elementary and secondary schools to establish school environment health programs to address indoor air and hazardous issues.

(7) Report annually to the House and the Senate Committee on Education, Arts and Culture the extent of indoor air and hazardous exposure problems in schools and the

percentage of schools that have established a school environmental health program or qualified for environmental health certification.

SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions hereof.

SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,