association of california school administrators

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To: Members of ACSA, CSBA, CASBO and CASH

RE: PCBs in Schools: Important initial guidance

Recent media stories have focused on the issue of PCBs in public schools and their potential impact on the health and safety of students, teachers and staff.

In addition, a national law firm – Baron and Budd – has recently begun offering free PCB testing to schools built between 1950 and 1980.

Over the course of the past six months, representatives from the Association of California School Administrators, the California School Boards Association, the California Association of School Business Officials and the Coalition for Adequate School Housing have been closely monitoring developments on the PCB issue. Staff from each organization has also met frequently with representatives of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to determine the scope of the issue and develop guidance for school districts on best practices and appropriate actions.

ACSA, CSBA, CASBO and CASH are working with EPA to develop a joint program to educate all school districts on the potential presence of PCBs in pre-1980 building materials and actions that could be taken to reduce potential exposures. We will be providing materials that will allow schools to evaluate age of construction and inspect specific buildings/rooms constructed prior to 1980 to identify and inventory suspected PCB containing building materials, including fluorescent light ballast and fixtures. Additionally, to assist those schools with pre-1980 buildings, we will be working with EPA to develop a tool kit for assisting the schools in identifying and managing PCB-containing materials.

In the meantime, we urge school districts to take the following actions:

• Review maintenance records to determine if PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts have been replaced.

• Review and evaluate general cleaning practices to ensure the cleanliness of classrooms and avoid dust accumulation.

• Contact the United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 9 with any questions you have regarding PCB containing materials. The appropriate contact is Steve Armann, PCB Program Coordinator, at armann.steve@epa.gov or (415) 972-3352.

• Prior to conducting PCB testing, consult with district counsel to ensure full understanding of federal Toxic Substances Control Act provisions that govern the treatment, disposal and handling of PCBs.