



The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1501

June 13, 2008

Dear Senator Grassley:

I am writing to respectfully bring to your attention a matter of grave concern to global public health. On April 25, 2008, the Iowa legislature approved mandating the Iowa Core Curriculum or the Model Core Curriculum, for all students in grades 9-12 by 2012 and grades K-8 by 2014. The Iowa Core Curriculum claims to:

“provide local school districts and nonpublic schools a guide to delivering instruction based on consistent, challenging and meaningful content to students...[and]...identifies the essential concepts and skill sets for literacy, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills).”

In the Model Core Science Curriculum Application B on p. 59 (http://www.iowamodelcore.org/docs/Model_Core_Science_Curriculum_final.pdf) under the heading “Essential Concepts: The Interdependence of Organisms,” students are encouraged to, “Write a letter to your legislator arguing against the sale of DDT to third world countries when it is banned in the U.S.” In the commendable effort to challenge students, however, the curriculum authors, legislature and Governor Culver are in fact encouraging students to lobby against U.S. Government policy and against the interests of malaria control programs in Africa, with potentially destructive consequences. Indeed, if Iowa schoolchildren actually succeeded in becoming mini-lobbyists as the Core Curriculum insinuates, they would quite literally be endangering the lives of African children.

Aside from being a brazen attempt to mobilize children for a highly ideological (and special interest) lobbying campaign, this is a woeful misappropriation of limited education resources based on faulty logic and a poor understanding of global public health challenges.

DDT is both approved and recommended by the World Health Organization for indoor residual spraying to control malaria. The chemical was granted a public health exemption under the Stockholm Treaty on Persistent Organic Pollutants in 2000 specifically for this purpose. DDT has saved millions of lives from malaria and other insect borne diseases over the past six decades and it continues to save lives in many African countries.

1050 17th St, NW, Suite 590
Washington, DC 20036
+1 202 223 3298

PO Box 17156, Congella
4013, South Africa
+27 31 205 8637

<http://fightingmalaria.org>

According to the US President's Malaria Initiative, "USAID adheres to strict environmental guidelines, approval processes, and procedures for the use of DDT and all other World Health Organization-approved insecticides in its malaria control programs" – specifically those laid out by the Stockholm Treaty.

African governments and countries around the world have used DDT to reduce and eradicate insect-borne diseases, and rightly demand to be able to continue to use it against malaria. Hundreds of millions of African children continue to be at risk of this disease. In Uganda, for example, malaria claims 320 lives every day. Apac, a northern lowland district, is one of the highest malaria transmission zones on the planet; children are bitten by an average of four malaria-carrying mosquitoes every night.

While Africa Fighting Malaria wholeheartedly supports the use of insecticide-treated bednets to combat this scourge, we recognize the Ugandan government's decision – and right – to implement a comprehensive malaria control program using all available tools. This includes indoor residual spraying with pyrethroid insecticides, and more recently DDT. The U.S. government is providing financial support for this effort through the President's Malaria Initiative on the basis of sound science, effective public health policy and internationally approved treaties.

There is no justifiable basis for public funds to be spent in Iowa teaching grade 9-12 students to lobby against this effort by writing inflammatory and scientifically unsound letters to legislators. This is an ill-informed and inappropriate activity based on personal values and short-sighted political motives that have no place in public education and which, if successful, could result in the continued loss of life in Africa.

In closing, I would like to point out that the fiercest resistance in Uganda and other African countries against the targeted spraying of DDT to control malaria has been from corporate interests, including multinational tobacco companies. We wonder if the Iowa Department of Education realizes that its proposed program puts Iowan school children in league with such an opportunistic lobbying campaign. Would it not be more appropriate for Iowan school children to express their solidarity with the hard working public health workers in Africa that conduct malaria control and more particularly with the young children that suffer and often die from this disease across the continent?

I hope sincerely that your office will challenge this and other ideologically motivated aspects of the new education curriculum. If any such activity as writing letters to legislators is to take place, it should proceed from a balanced and well-informed treatment of both sides of any potential issue.

Yours faithfully,



Richard Tren
Director
Africa Fighting Malaria

cc:

The Honorable Tom Harkin, United States Senate
The Honorable Bruce Braley, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Leonard L. Boswell, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Steve King, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Dave Loebsack, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Tom Latham, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Chet Culver, Governor of Iowa
The Honorable John P. Kibbie, President of the Iowa State Senate
The Honorable Michael E. Gronstal, Iowa State Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Ron Wieck, Iowa State Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Pat Murphy, Iowa Speaker of the House
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Iowa House Majority Leader
The Honorable Christopher Rants, Iowa State Representative
The Honorable Judy Jeffrey, Director, Iowa Department of Education
The Honorable Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture
The Honorable Brian Schoenjahn, Chair, Iowa Education Committee
The Honorable Dave Mulder, Ranking Member, Iowa Education Committee
The Honorable Dennis H. Black, Chair, Iowa Natural Resources and Environment Committee
The Honorable E. Thurman Gaskill, Ranking Member, Iowa Natural Resources and Environment Committee