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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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**Dromm, Ferreras and Activists Call for
Accelerated Timeline of PCB removal in Public Schools**
*City's Proposal to Replace Light Fixtures Containing Dangerous
Levels of PCB Could take 10 years*

Corona, NY, April 19, 2011 -- NYC Council Member Daniel Dromm and NYC City Council Member Julissa Ferreras joined activists from New York Communities for Change (NYCC), Queens Congregations United for Action (QCUA), and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) on the steps of City Hall last week to demand the Department of Education speed up the process of replacing light fixtures contaminated with toxic chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) found in public schools.

"We need the City to move quickly to protect our children," said NYC Council Member and former public school teacher, Daniel Dromm. "The Department of Education must do whatever is necessary to act responsibly and respond to the severity of this issue to ensure a safe learning environment for our children."

Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered elevated levels of the PCBs at several public schools and pressed the City to come up with a citywide plan to replace lighting fixtures containing PCBs. In response, the Bloomberg Administration announced a plan in which the City will conduct comprehensive energy audits and retrofit lights, boilers and other equipment in 772 City school buildings over the next ten years.

However, despite the repeated calls from elected officials, parents and community activists to accelerate the timeline of PCB removal in public schools, the Department of Education continues to drag their feet.

"Our children's safety and the safety of our school's staff are important and must be a priority," said NYC Council Member Julissa Ferreras. "We must do what is necessary to remove PCB contamination from our schools in a timely fashion, so as not to create a full blown public health problem. I look forward to working together with the parents and the DOE in finding a suitable resolution to this issue."

Earlier in the week, a special PTA meeting was conducted by QCUA at IS 61 in Corona, where over a 150 parents gathered to learn about what they can do about schools that are contaminated with PCBs. Over a hundred schools citywide have tested positive for

levels of PCB's much higher than the EPA's limit of 50ppm and hundreds more are at risk.

"I am the parent of a 6th grader here in IS 61," said Socorro Morales, parent leader with Queens Congregations United for Action. "Our parent-led testing of a small sample of caulk revealed an abnormally high level of PCB's in this school and who knows what further testing will reveal? We just don't know! This is a toxic that can cause many illnesses. I'm very worried about what this means for my son and the kids and teachers in all contaminated schools. How is it possible that the DOE knows the dangers and wants to take 10 years to address this? I want my school thoroughly tested and, if it is further contaminated, I want it cleaned now, not in 10 years!"

PCBs are among the most toxic chemicals in the world and are particularly harmful to children and pregnant women. Repeated exposure to PCBs has been linked to nervous & respiratory system problems and learning disabilities in children.

"Learning disabilities, asthma and cancer are associated with long term exposure to low levels of PCBs," said NYCC parent leader Regina Castro. "The city's plan to remove PCB containing lights over 10 years makes no sense! Kids should be our priority. They are our future. We are supposed to protect them. We ask the Mayor, are we really going to let our kids be exposed to toxic, cancer causing chemicals for 5 or 10 more years when they don't have to be? We know replacing the lights within 2 years is very possible – if, IF, the Mayor cares about our children. And though 2 years is still too long it is much better than 5 years or 10 years."

Council Member Ferreras, who also attended the meeting emphasized the importance of getting parents involved in this issue because the schools where they send their kids may be extremely contaminated.

QCUA organized the meeting to get parents involved in this health related issue and to empower parents from the local community.

Toxic PCBs were commonly used in building materials for NYC schools built between 1950 and 1978.

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