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CONSENSUS STATEMENT: http://www.iceh.org/LDDI.html

Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative (LDDI) Publishes Scientific Consensus Statement on Environmental Factors

February 20, 2008, Seattle, WA. The Collaborative on Health and the Environment's Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative published today the *Scientific Consensus Statement on Environmental Agents Associated with Neurodevelopmental Disorders* (available at http://www.iceh.org/LDDI.html). This statement, signed by more than 50 scientists and health professionals nationally and internationally, summarizes the latest science about environmental contaminants associated with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intellectual disabilities and developmental delays.

The statement, which has a glossary and over 200 references, was drafted and reviewed by a prestigious committee of scientists and health professionals based in North America. They concluded:

> **"Given the established knowledge, protecting children from neurotoxic environmental exposures from the earliest stages of fetal development through adolescence is clearly an essential public health measure if we are to help reduce the growing numbers of those with learning and developmental disorders and create an environment in which children can reach and maintain their full potential."**

"We know enough now to move on with taking steps to protect our children. This document pulls that knowledge together to further this vital effort," said reviewer Martha Herbert, PhD, MD, an assistant professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School and a pediatric neurologist with subspecialty certification in neurodevelopmental disabilities at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Other researchers on the review committee underscored the cost-savings, policy-related and ethical implications of this consensus statement. "We could cut the health costs of childhood disabilities and disease by billions of dollars every year by minimizing contaminants in the environment," said Phil Landrigan, MD, MSc, of the Children's Environmental Health Center at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. "Investing in our children's health is both cost-effective and the right thing to do."

"The overwhelming evidence shows that certain environmental exposures can contribute to life-long learning and developmental disorders," noted Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, with the Science and Environmental Health Network. "We should eliminate children's exposures to substances that we know can have these impacts by implementing stronger health-based policies requiring safer alternatives. Further, we must urgently examine other environmental contaminants of concern for which safety data are lacking. "

"The proportion of environmentally induced learning and developmental disabilities is a question of profound human, scientific and public policy significance," said lead author Steven G. Gilbert, PhD, DABT, of the Institute of Neurotoxicology & Neurological Disorders, "and has implications for individuals, families, school systems, communities and the future of our society. The bottom line is it is our ethical responsibility to ensure all children have a healthy future."

This document is designed for researchers, health professionals, health-affected groups, environmental health and justice organizations, policymakers and journalists to use as a resource for understanding and addressing concerns about links between environmental factors and neurodevelopmental disorders.