

**TOXINS (PERSISTENT AND BIOACCUMULATIVE)
AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CHILDREN**

(Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2002)

Reviewed by Board of Managers March 2012

- WHEREAS, A group of pollutants known as persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) are toxic, persist in the environment, bioaccumulate through the food web, and pose a risk of causing adverse effects to human health and the environment; and
- WHEREAS, The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a list of persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs), which includes toxins such as lead, mercury and its compounds, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), DDT (1,1,1-trichloro-2,2-bis(p-chlorophenyl)ethane), dioxins and furans, and certain pesticides that are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system and reproduction and development; and
- WHEREAS, Persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) have also been linked to cancer and significant developmental impairments, and particular risks may be posed to the developing fetus or young child in whom critical organs are still under development; and
- WHEREAS, Because the fetus and child are especially vulnerable to the health effects of persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) such as lead, mercury, dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and their brain, nervous, reproductive and immune systems can therefore be damaged by lower levels of exposure than would impact adults; and
- WHEREAS, People who rely on their own fishing for protein in their diet and those who consume fish from many of the waterways in California are at additional risk as persistent, bioaccumulative toxin (PBT) contamination in fish reaches health advisory levels for dioxins, mercury, DDT (1,1,1-trichloro-2,2-bis(p-chlorophenyl)ethane), chlordane and dieldrin throughout California and the U.S.; and
- WHEREAS, Exposure to persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) is a clear threat to public and environmental health, and PBT contamination has a disproportionate impact on children, especially where exposure is greater; now therefore be it

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- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts work to educate the PTA membership and the general public about the hazards to human health, and particularly to children’s health and development, of persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs), including but not limited to lead in paint and drinking fountains, mercury in fish and other products, asbestos in schools and on playgrounds, chemical waste in the environment, pesticide applications and sprayings; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts support legislation and/or regulation at all levels of government to reduce the use of persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) and their presence in the environment; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts urge the establishment of child safe levels on all chemicals and other products tested for neurotoxic and other health effects, and demand the application of child-sensitive safety provisions to all chemicals already tested for safe exposure levels; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts urge school districts and other responsible individuals and/or agencies to reduce the use of toxic chemicals through programs such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a system to manage pest problems using the least toxic or non-toxic method, in schools, child care centers, parks and playgrounds; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts urge the establishment of policies and practices by school districts and other local and state agencies that recognize and respect the rights of parents and the public right-to-know about persistent, bioaccumulative toxin (PBT) exposures in their neighborhoods, schools, child care centers, parks and playgrounds; public buildings, water, air and food; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That California State PTA encourage all other state PTAs to adopt a similar resolution.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) are a group of pollutants that are extremely toxic, persist in the environment, and accumulate in the food chain. PBTs are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer and genetic impacts. Children and the developing fetus are the group at highest risk for exposure to and health impacts from these pollutants, especially PBTs such as lead, mercury, dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). These pollutants find their way into water and feedstock, and thus into the food supply. Some PBTs, such as lead, find their way into water still found in children's play and learning environments.

The California State PTA currently has position statements that are consistent with a concern about persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs): “Environmental Protection (Toxic/Hazardous Materials)” (1998), “Use of Pesticides In and Around Schools” (1998) and “Lead Poisoning” (1999). This resolution encompasses all of the above issues while also addressing the particular vulnerability of children not just in California, but also throughout the country. The California State PTA Legislation Plank #12 calls for support of legislation “to prevent, control or eliminate hazards to the health, safety and well-being of all children and youth.”

A majority of toxins (PBTs) persist in the environment for decades; heavy metals never break down, just recirculate. All individuals, everywhere, are faced with the possible contamination of the air, water and food from these toxins, and children are the most vulnerable. It is particularly important for the PTA to make a strong statement against the continued use of these toxins and to support legislation that will ensure a safer, healthier world for all children.