An act relating to the protection of students’ health by requiring the use of safe cleaning products in schools

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. chapter 39 is added to read:

CHAPTER 39. CLEANING PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS

§ 1781. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Air freshener” means an aerosol spray, liquid deodorizer, plug-in product, para-di-chlorobenzene block, scented urinal screen, or other product used to mask odors or freshen the air in a room.

(2) “Antimicrobial pesticides” means a pesticide that is intended to:

(A) disinfect, sanitize, reduce, or mitigate growth or development of microbiological organisms; or
(B) protect inanimate objects, industrial processes or systems, surfaces, water, or other chemical substances from contamination, fouling, or deterioration caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa, algae, or slime.

(3) “Cleaning product” means an institutional compound intended for routine cleaning, including antimicrobial pesticides, general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, glass cleaners, carpet cleaners, floor care products, and hand soaps. “Cleaning product” shall also mean disinfectants once the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has approved third party certification of environmentally preferable disinfectants.

(4) “Commissioner” means the commissioner of health or the commissioner’s designee.

(5) “Custodial manager” means the employee of a school district who has supervisory and decision-making authority with regard to the sanitary and physical condition of school property, including authority over cleaning product purchases.

(6) “Disinfectant” means substances or mixtures of substances used on hard inanimate surfaces and objects to destroy or irreversibly inactivate infectious fungi and bacteria but not necessarily their spores.

(7) “Environmentally preferable cleaning product” means a cleaning product that has a less negative effect on human health and the environment when compared to competing products serving the same purpose.
“Green cleaning” means a practice that includes the use of a cleaning product certified as environmentally preferable by an independent third party, best practices that follow accepted management standards and improve indoor air quality, and equipment that facilitates effective cleaning.

“Independent third party” means a nationally recognized organization that has developed a program for the purpose of certifying environmentally preferable cleaning products. The independent third party’s certification program shall:

(i) define a manufacturer’s certification fees;

(ii) identify any potential conflicts of interest;

(iii) base certification on consideration of human health and safety, ecological toxicity, other environmental impacts, and resource conservation as appropriate for the product and its packaging on a life-cycle basis;

(iv) develop certification standards in an open, public, and transparent manner that involves the public and key stakeholders;

(v) periodically revise and update the standards to remain consistent with current research about the impacts of chemicals on human health;

(vi) monitor and enforce the standards for the purpose of certification, and have the authority to inspect the manufacturing facility and
periodically do so, and have a registered or legally protected certification mark; and

    (vii) make the standards easily accessible to purchasers and manufacturers; or

(B) In the alternative, “independent third party” means any organization otherwise deemed by the department of health to satisfactorily assess and certify environmentally preferable cleaning products.

(10) “Manufacturer” means any person or entity engaged in the process of manufacturing cleaning products for commercial distribution.

(11) “School” means:

(A) A public school in Vermont, including a regional technical center and a comprehensive high school; and

(B) An approved independent school.

§ 1782. ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE CLEANING PRODUCTS

(a)(1) A school district shall ensure that only environmentally preferable cleaning products are used to clean schools within its jurisdiction. The custodial manager shall use:

(A) those environmentally preferable cleaning products utilized by the department of buildings and general services in state contracts; or

(B) cleaning products certified as environmentally preferable by an independent third party.
(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection, a school district may use cleaning products purchased prior to July 1, 2011 after that date until such products are depleted, but no later than July 1, 2012.

(b) Each school district shall prohibit school employees from accepting or using cleaning products that do not meet the requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a school district may temporarily use nonenvironmentally preferable disinfectants registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency according to manufacturers’ specifications when:

(1) blood, body fluids, or fecal soiling is present on any surface; or

(2) the commissioner makes a case-specific determination that failure to use nonenvironmentally preferable disinfectants would create a risk to public health and safety.

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a school district’s water systems may be treated pursuant to state standards.

§ 1783. AIR FRESHENERS

A school district shall not purchase or allow the use of air fresheners in a school.
Sec. 2. Sec. 2 of No. 125 of the Acts of the 1999 Adj. Sess. (2000) is amended to read:

Sec. 2. COMMISSIONERS OF HEALTH AND OF BUILDINGS AND GENERAL SERVICES; SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WEBSITE

(a)(1) The commissioners of health and of buildings and general services shall jointly create and jointly update as necessary an electronic school environmental health clearinghouse site on the health department’s website, including diagnostic checklists and searchable databases. This website shall include:

(1)(A) Information on materials and practices in common use in school operations and construction that may compromise indoor air quality or negatively impact human health;

(2)(B) Information on potential health problems associated with these materials, with specific reference to children’s vulnerability;

(3)(C) Information on integrated pest management and alternatives to chemical pest control;

(4)(D) Information on methods to reduce or eliminate exposure to potentially hazardous substances in schools, including the following:

(A)(i) a list of preventive management options, such as ventilation, equipment upkeep, design strategies, and performance standards;
(B)(ii) a list of nontoxic or least-toxic office and classroom supplies, maintenance and cleaning chemicals, building equipment, and materials and furnishings; and

(C)(iii) a list of environmental health criteria that schools may use as a decision-making tool when determining what materials to purchase or use in school construction or operations;

(E) Information on environmentally preferable cleaning products certified by an independent third party, including:

(i) a list of recommended environmentally preferable cleaning products certified by an independent third party pursuant to 18 V.S.A. chapter 39 and links to the third party’s website if available; and

(ii) procedures for using environmentally preferable cleaning products;

(S)(F) The model school environmental health policy and management plan developed pursuant to Sec. 3 of this act.

(2) The commissioner of education shall notify each school district that it shall annually:

(A) view the environmental health clearinghouse site; and

(B) certify electronically that it is in compliance with the laws described on the environmental health clearinghouse site.
(b) The commissioners of health, of buildings and general services, and of education, with help from the secretary of the agency of natural resources when appropriate, shall:

(1) Review the information on the school environmental health information clearinghouse at least twice yearly, and update it whenever significant developments occur.

(2) At the request of school officials, assist school environmental health coordinators to identify potential sources of environmental pollution in the school, and make recommendations on how to alleviate any problems.

(3) Annually, organize a school environmental health training workshop for school environmental health coordinators and school administrators, and an annual training for school maintenance and custodial staff. Each workshop and training shall include instruction on green cleaning practices, including products and procedures as defined pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 1781. The department shall issue certificates of training to participants who successfully complete the workshops.

(4) Publicize the availability of information through the school environmental health clearinghouse.

(5) Provide information and referrals to members of school communities who contact the school environmental health clearinghouse with hazardous exposure and indoor air concerns.
(6) Assist elementary and secondary schools in Vermont to establish comprehensive school environmental health programs, which have all or most of the elements of the model policy developed pursuant to Sec. 3 of this act, to address indoor air and hazardous exposure issues.

(7) Report annually to the house and senate committees on education on the extent of indoor air and hazardous exposure problems in Vermont schools and on the percentage of Vermont schools that have established a school environmental health program or qualified for environmental health certification.

(c) Any information provided under this section shall be based on peer-reviewed published scientific material.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2011.