

Collegium Ramazzini Statement on the Unjustified Dismissal of Dr. Ruth Etzel

The Collegium Ramazzini is an independent, international society comprised of 180 physicians and scientists from 35 countries. Its mission is to increase scientific knowledge of the environmental and occupational causes of disease and to transmit this knowledge to decision-makers, the media and the global public in order to prevent disease, promote good health and save lives.

The Collegium Ramazzini expresses grave concern over the decision by the Trump administration and the leadership of the US Environmental Protection Agency to relieve Dr. Ruth Etzel MD, PhD of her duties as Director of EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection. EPA leadership have offered no explanation for this action.

Dr. Etzel is a distinguished pediatrician and epidemiologist who served for many years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. She is an Editor of the American Academy of Pediatrics' *Handbook of Pediatric Environmental Health*. She is eminently well qualified to lead EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection.

EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection has played a vital role for more than two decades in protecting America's children against environmental threats to health. The Office has worked with teachers and school boards to improve air quality in schools. It has pushed EPA to strengthen carcinogen risk assessments to protect children against cancer. It educates pediatricians, obstetricians, nurses and parents about how to reduce infants' chemical exposures. It has insisted that the EPA's plan for enforcing the 2016 Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act protect children's health. In recent months, the Office has played a critical role in trying to strengthen protections against childhood lead poisoning and in protecting children from atmospheric mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants as the Trump administration considers rolling back Mercury Air Toxics Standards.

The decision to remove Dr. Etzel from her position is part of a broader initiative by the Trump administration and EPA leadership to weaken programs that protect the health of the public. The weakening of the Office of Children's Health Protection is especially insidious, because by weakening health protections for young children – the most vulnerable members of our society - the Trump administration is putting in jeopardy the health of all Americans.

The Collegium Ramazzini calls upon EPA leadership to reverse their decision and to reinstate Dr. Ruth Etzel as Director of the Office of Children's Health Protection. Failing that, the Collegium Ramazzini calls upon members of the United States Congress to open an investigation into the EPA's removal of Dr. Etzel and into the broader erosion within EPA of legally mandated protections for children's health.