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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Landmark Victory for California Kids – Durham to Provide Clean School Buses**

**San Francisco, CA** – Today, Durham School Services, the second largest private school bus operator in the state, agreed to start phasing in clean school buses to districts they serve throughout California by the end of this year, with full phase-in by 2014. As school districts across the nation struggle to improve air quality on board school buses, this move significantly reduces children's exposure to diesel exhaust and confirms Durham's commitment to the health and safety of California school children.

Recent studies by the California Air Resources Board and others have found:

- Children riding school buses can be exposed to 4 to 10 times higher levels of diesel engine exhaust than background levels, and much of this is due to "self-pollution" from the bus's own exhaust.
- Exposure to diesel engine exhaust can pose a cancer risk to children that is 23 to 46 times higher than the risk level considered "significant" under federal law.

- About seventy percent (70%) of the cancer risk that the average Californian faces from breathing toxic air pollutants stems from diesel exhaust particles.
- Children are especially vulnerable to the hazardous health consequences from diesel engine exhaust because their immune systems are not fully developed and they inhale more air than adults every day, based on body weight.

The decision to retrofit and/or replace unhealthy diesel buses with clean ones will reduce Durham's diesel pollution levels by over 85%, and came about through settlement negotiations with Bay Area environmental groups, Environmental Law Foundation, Communities for a Better Environment and Our Children's Earth. The groups sued Durham in January for violating California law by exposing children to cancer-causing diesel exhaust without a warning.

While Durham makes the transition to clean diesel buses, they agreed to post warning signs on polluting buses as well as notify students and their families that diesel buses expose children to diesel engine exhaust, which is known to the State of California to cause cancer. "This agreement both protects and empowers our communities. While it ultimately reduces the amount of diesel some children breathe, it also gives families and the public the truth about diesel buses, information parents throughout California can use to demand their school districts provide clean school buses to all California children," stated Shana Lazerow, attorney for Communities for a Better Environment.

In contrast, Laidlaw Education Services, the largest operator in California and the nation, also sued by the environmental groups, refuses to clean up its act. While Laidlaw's 2006 annual report shows its school bus division earned \$294.5 million on revenues of over \$1.5 billion, Laidlaw refuses to commit to retrofitting its bus fleet. In fact, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District offered Laidlaw a \$1.7 million grant to cover all costs for retrofitting 100 school buses in Richmond but Laidlaw turned the money down. Said Mike Costa of Our Children's Earth, "what kind of company turns down free money to protect kids?"

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