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U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer files “Trevor’s Law” to Better Investigate and Address Cancer Clusters Across the U.S.

Washington, D.C....According to Trevor’s Trek Foundation, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) yesterday filed Strengthening Protection For Children and Communities From Disease Clusters Act, or “Trevor’s Law,” legislation that calls for an improved, streamlined process to investigate and address disease clusters across the U.S. by:

- ✓ Strengthening federal agency coordination and accountability when investigating and helping to address potential disease clusters;
- ✓ Increasing resources to communities who may be impacted by potential disease clusters, including by providing for community-based committees that play an integral role in actions to investigate and help address such clusters; and
- ✓ Enhancing federal, state and academic capacity to investigate and help address such clusters, including through partnerships and grants and by developing new pollution and disease tracking tools to facilitate investigation and actions to address clusters.

The law was named for Trevor Schaefer, a young cancer survivor and advocate who was diagnosed with brain cancer seven years ago at the age of thirteen. At the time of his diagnosis, there were other children and young adults with brain cancer in his small town in Idaho. He and his mother became aware that environmental contamination might have played a part in these illnesses. Yet authorities did not seem to care. Trevor’s mission evolved: he is now a champion for the protection of children and small communities from environmental contamination, and he wants to help them from slipping through the cracks of environmental regulation. He wants to hold companies accountable for proper disposal of toxins and to make sure that other children will not have to experience what he did. Trevor’s story is chronicled in a recently-completed manuscript titled, *The Boy on the Lake* by Susan E. Rosser.

“Environmental toxin exposure is insidious in all instances, yet it affects our children in greater proportion than adults,” Schaefer said. “This bill will help eradicate predatory disease by bringing together agencies with the relevant expertise needed to investigate and report these clusters.”

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Trevor first met Senator Boxer at an event in 2007 in California, and again last year in Washington, DC when he and his mother, along with Susan Rosser and Professor Mark Witten, a pediatric toxicologist out of the University of Arizona, presented the outlines for the present bill to the senator and EPA Director, Lisa Jackson.

Senator Boxer said: "Whenever there is an unusual increase in disease within a community, those families deserve to know that the federal government's top scientists and experts are accessible and available to help, especially when the health and safety of children are at risk. I am pleased to be introducing this legislation today that will enable communities to get the answers they need as quickly as possible."

Nationally, the statistics are alarming. According to the CDC and National Center for Disease Control, 46 children per day (two classrooms full) are being diagnosed with cancers unrelated to genetics or family history.

Nearly every state has reported cancer clusters: from New Haven, Connecticut, to Carlsbad, California the numbers continue to grow. Some of the more notable clusters include: Moreland, ID; Fallon, NV; The Acreage, FL; Sierra Vista, AZ; Carlsbad, CA; Santa Susana, CA; Kettleman City, CA; and Victor, NY. State epidemiologists are charged with investigating an average of 1,000 suspected cancer clusters every year.*

Senator Boxer's bill would set up an objective, transparent process for conducting investigations and provide for the prominent involvement of concerned community members.

For more information, visit the Environment and Public Works Committee website: <http://epw.senate.gov>

Trevor's Trek Foundation (www.trevorstrek.com), was co-founded by Susan Rosser and Charlie Smith with her son, Trevor Schaefer, in 2007. Trevor and Charlie have worked to raise awareness of disease clusters and their possible links to toxins in the environment, and to help build support for legislation to assist communities experiencing suspected disease clusters.

*National Disease Cluster Alliance (NDCA)

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