



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

April 23, 2014

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Dear [REDACTED]:

Thank you for your correspondence and inquiry to Governor Martin O'Malley regarding your concerns about cell phone use by children, as well as your request for a health and safety statement regarding radiofrequency radiation. The Governor received your correspondence and asked me to respond on his behalf.

I have asked our Environmental Health Bureau to develop some information. I know that you have already had several conversations with Dr. Clifford Mitchell, Director of the Health Bureau, regarding these issues, and he has provided me with some of the material included in this response.

I understand from Dr. Mitchell that you are specifically requesting a statement on the health implications and safety of wireless radiation in school buildings from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. I also understand that Dr. Mitchell explained that the Department does not issue formal "health and safety statements," but does have a statutory responsibility to assure the health and safety of all Marylanders. As part of that responsibility, there is a set of laws and regulations that define the scope of the Department's authority, which also, is subject to federal law and regulation. There is also overlap with the Department of the Environment's authority.

You have provided Dr. Mitchell with a number of references related to electromagnetic radiation, specifically microwave radiation. Those references, as well as a number of others, have addressed a number of issues, including a speculative link between microwave radiation and cancer, autism spectrum disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders in laboratory animals, sperm motility disorders, gene expression, and other possible biological effects.

As you and Dr. Mitchell have discussed, there is a great deal of controversy and need for additional research related to microwave radiation and chronic health effects. Some of these concerns center around the thermal effects of microwave radiation; some center on other possible mechanisms of interaction of microwaves with biological tissue.

In addition to the references you cited, the Department's Environmental Health Bureau looked at some of the more recent scientific reviews related to microwave radiation and children's health. On the basis of that review, it is fair to say that there are legitimate questions about the long-term health implications of microwave radiation, as well as methodological questions that limit our ability to provide definitive statements about those health implications.

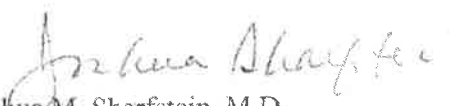
As I mentioned in my previous letter, the Department does not have the resources necessary to conduct an independent investigation to answer these questions, so we rely on the developing information from scientific literature, expert bodies such as the World Health Organization and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the National Institutes of Health, the Federal Communications Commission, and others.

The Department continues to follow this issue, and will also be interested in the advice and counsel of groups such as the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council. The Department also will develop any future policy guidance on this issue in consultation with the Department of Education and the Department of the Environment. I would also say that I would encourage you to continue your efforts to have us pay attention to this emerging issue.

Finally, I recognize that as a parent, you make decisions for your children that would be even more protective than federal or State laws and regulations. Keeping informed about developments in this area will allow you to make personal decisions about risks and benefits that are right for you and your family. The Department will continue to do all we can, in cooperation with federal, State, and local partners and concerned citizens, to ensure that we use the best possible information and science to protect the health of Maryland's people.

Thank you again for your correspondence. The Governor appreciates hearing from you and, on his behalf, I thank you for sharing your concerns. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the Environmental Health help line toll-free at 1-866-703-3266.

Sincerely,


Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D.
Secretary

cc: The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Laura Herrera, MD, MPH
Ms. Shawn Cain
Michelle Spencer, MS
Clifford S. Mitchell, MS, MD, MPH