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Embargoed until 9:30 am Oct. 27, 2008

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## **MARYLAND HEALTH AND ELDER CARE FACILITIES LEAD WAY IN CUTTING TOXIC CHEMICAL USE**

**Baltimore, Maryland (October 27, 2008)** - A report released today by public health groups and leading Maryland health and elder care facilities documents new practices and policies to eliminate toxic pesticide use. The changes reflect a heightened awareness of the need to protect particularly vulnerable populations from serious health risks associated with toxic chemical exposure.

A growing body of scientific research links pesticides to Parkinson's disease, asthma, cancer and other illnesses.

"The Maryland health care institutions in the report are to be commended for showing national leadership in adopting non-toxic pest management techniques that protect the health of patients, visitors and staff," said Jay Feldman, the report's co-author and executive director of Beyond Pesticides.

The report, "Taking Toxics out of Maryland's Health Care Sector: Transition to Green Pest Management Practices to Protect Health and the Environment," was co-written by the Maryland Pesticide Network, a statewide coalition advocating safe pest management practices, and Beyond Pesticides, a national environmental and public health group, under their joint "Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in Health Care Facilities Project," and in collaboration with Maryland Hospitals for a Healthy Environment at the University of Maryland School of Nursing.

IPM is an approach to pest management that evaluates the causes of pest problems and adopts measures that seek to prevent pests through non-chemical means. The approach introduces defined least-toxic pesticides only as a last resort.

The report includes a survey of Maryland health and elder care facilities that reveals a general reliance on toxic pesticides for pest control. Of the 25 pesticides identified by survey participants as being used at facilities, 11 are linked to cancer, 12 are associated with

neurological effects, 10 are associated with reproductive effects, 5 cause birth defects or developmental effects, 12 are sensitizers or irritants, 10 cause liver or kidney damage and 6 are suspected endocrine disruptors.

“In contrast to these findings, the involvement of Maryland’s leading health care facilities in this ‘greening’ effort shows a commitment to putting our state in the forefront of a growing nationwide movement,” said Ruth Berlin, MPN executive director.

The facilities adopting broad policies to eliminate toxic chemical use in pest management include: Erickson Retirement Communities, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital and Springfield Hospital Center. Additionally, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, the University of Maryland Medical Center and Broadmead Retirement Community are working toward adopting official IPM policies.

Other facilities that have recently joined the Project are Copper Ridge, Harbor Hospital, The Forbush School, Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital, Mercy Medical Center, and Sinai Hospital.