

Class action lawsuit filed against company pushing unsafe ionizers to reopen classrooms across the US

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In the interest of reopening schools as soon as possible, hundreds of K-12 school districts, private schools, and universities across the US have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in federal relief funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to purchase Needle Point Bipolar Ionizers (NBPIs), supposedly to clean indoor air and kill coronavirus particles.

Despite their lofty claims to neutralize virus particles, recent independent studies show that NBPIs do not improve indoor air quality. A recently filed class action lawsuit consolidates the science by air quality experts and puts forward strong refutations against the claims made by manufacturers, and echoed by hundreds of districts and campuses across the country, that NBPIs are safe and remove pathogens including SARS-CoV-2 from the air.

Michael Mills, one of the attorneys on the case, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The evidence is overwhelming. We are convinced we are right. I don’t know how districts can continue to use these products. If teachers or students get sick, these districts have zero protection.”

The lawsuit was filed last month against Global Plasma Solutions (GPS), a top selling manufacturer of NBPIs. The suit charges the company with fraud and claims the company used false, deceptive and misleading claims to sell its products and capitalize from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the mad dash to reopen schools, ionizers have been installed in classrooms, school buses, offices, gymnasiums and cafeterias, providing a false sense of protection from COVID-19. Furthermore, harmful byproducts produced by the technology place

the health and safety of millions of students and staff at heightened risk.

GPS and other manufacturers of NBPIs claim that their ionizers remove over 99 percent of SARS-CoV-2 particles from the air. However, a recent peer reviewed study led by three universities revealed that NBPIs had an entirely negligible effect on removing the airborne particles of coronavirus and only reduced 20-30 percent of the virus from surfaces.

Dr. Delphine Farmer, a leading researcher in the study, recently explained to the WSWs that ionizers do not actually accomplish their “bold claims” in real world settings. GPS based its claims of a 99 percent removal of coronavirus from the air on a company-funded study conducted in a shoe box-sized container (not a room or classroom). Instead of neutralizing SARS-CoV-2 particles in the air, the devices instead produce volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

According to the lawsuit, independent studies cited in the case documents show that the products are not only ineffective at cleaning the air in real world conditions, but byproducts from the devices include the following harmful toxins:

- Acetone: long-term exposure can produce damage to kidneys, liver, skin, central nervous system and reproductive system.
- Ethanol: chronic intermittent ethanol vapor exposure produces widespread significant tissue injury including hepatic, pulmonary, and cardiovascular changes.
- Toluene: long-term inhalation of toluene can cause permanent damage to the brain, muscles, heart, and kidneys.
- Butyraldehyde: inhalation of Butyraldehyde can

irritate the lungs, causing coughing and shortness of breath, while higher exposures can cause a pulmonary edema.

In addition to the above toxins, Dr. Marwa Zaatari, a mechanical engineer, expert on indoor air quality and member of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) epidemic task force, also warns that ionizers have been shown to produce ozone and formaldehyde.

GPS and other companies selling these “snake oil” ionizer devices have profited tremendously off of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the lawsuit documents, GPS, which was founded in 2008, had a previous focus on “providing energy savings solutions. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the company’s focus shifted, and in CEO Glenn Brinckman’s words, ‘it’s all about pathogens and coronavirus and COVID-19.’”

ActivePure Technology, which employs former Trump adviser Dr. Deborah Birx as its chief medical and science adviser, is another company profiting from ionizers. A recent LinkedIn job ad for the company recruiting salespeople stated, “Make Tons of Money with this COVID-killing Technology!!...We have reps [who] made over 6-figures in 1 month selling to 1 school district.” Foaming at the mouth over the profits to be made, the ad exclaims, “By the way, the company is expanding by triple digits each month and this is just the tip of the iceberg!”

These technologies are being utilized by districts to provide a false sense of security and reassurance to concerned students, staff and parents who have faced a relentless barrage of propaganda to send them back to unsafe classrooms. Significantly, when a recent statement from Columbia County School District in Georgia announced masks are no longer a requirement in classrooms, officials sought to reassure their community that the continued use of ionizers in classrooms and on buses would provide adequate protection from COVID-19.

The installation of ionizers also solves another issue for districts, as they are far less costly and have no industry standards compared to proven mitigation strategies for improving indoor air quality, such as updating Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning (HVAC) systems, using Merv-13 filters, and operating

HVAC systems at high efficiency in order to ensure at least five complete air exchanges per hour.

The lawsuit itself shows that opposition among parents, educators, and students has emerged in response to haphazard reopening campaigns which have allowed schools and workplaces to transform into sites of spread and infection of the virus.

Concerned parents of Montclair Public Schools in New Jersey expressed opposition to the use of GPS ionizers in classrooms during an April school board meeting. Parents cited independent scientific papers, articles and letters from experts in air quality, and in response the district disconnected the devices until further notice.

Superintendent Mark Triplett of Newark Unified School District in California recently announced the district will turn off all 556 ionizers it installed from GPS until further notice. According to local news media, Triplett sent an email to the entire district on Tuesday, saying the district had “been made aware” of a proposed class action lawsuit filed against Global Plasma Solutions in Delaware.

The San Diego Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee has called for ionizers to be shut off in the Sweetwater Union High School District, and urges educators, parents and students across the US and globally to form similar committees to fight for safety and the defense of public education. All educators and workers concerned with placing the highest levels of safety in classrooms and workplaces should contact the WSWS today to build a committee in your schools and district.



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