

# Strong Foundation, Soaring Heights

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

START REPORT➤



# Letter From Our CEO

Dear CEH Community,

I had the honor of taking the helm of CEH in Fall 2023 after almost two decades leading environmental health, climate resiliency, and sustainability work for the last three New York City Mayors. As a longtime advocate of public health and equity, I have always been impressed by the boldness and courage of CEH as an organization that punches well above its weight class.

When I met the team for the first time at the Oakland office, it was clear to me how this small group of individuals could achieve such an outsized impact: the passion and subject matter expertise in the room were so palpable! It was a moment that really imprinted in me what a powerful and special organization CEH is.

As I write this, I have only been on the job for a little over six months, which is a very short amount of time compared to the more than 27 years of CEH’s existence! There are so many wins to celebrate from 2023 that build on the strong foundation laid down by those who came before me, as you will see in this report.

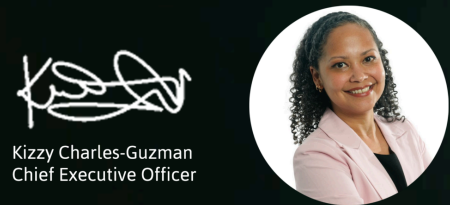
I am committed to championing many strategic priorities this year and beyond as part of my vision to take CEH’s work to the next level, including:

- Integrating our various efforts to eliminate PFAS or “forever chemicals” pollution into a strategic “all hands on deck” approach
- Doubling down on our science-driven policy work to influence and advocate for health-protecting, pollution-preventing laws and regulations nationally
- Reinvigorating our legal strategies to have a more national impact, wielding the power of the federal Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and other bedrock environmental legislation
- Pursuing legal and other avenues to hold regulators accountable for enforcing existing laws that are meant to protect the health of all people and empower communities to advocate for their own wellbeing
- Harnessing the buying power of large institutions, governments, and school districts to promote safer, healthier and greener practices that detoxify indoor environments where we spend over 90% of our time

Together with our partners, we will focus on executing the most impactful public health and climate solutions. I am excited to dive even deeper into this work and meet many more of you who have made possible all the wins that inspire me to lead CEH.

In closing, I want to express my immense gratitude to CEH’s Founder Michael Green for his audacious vision and legacy, to Regina Jackson for her estimable leadership as Interim CEO during 2022 and 2023, and to Charlie Pizarro for his immense support during my transition. Finally, a big thank you to our team, board, partners, and supporters, without whom none of this work would be possible.

I look forward to building CEH’s next chapter of transformational impact together with all of you.



# 2023 By The Numbers

200M+

PEOPLE REACHED BY PRESS AND MEDIA COVERAGE OF OUR PROGRAM'S WORK

7

NEW BAY AREA SCHOOLS STARTED USING OUR DITCHING DISPOSABLES TOOLKIT

638,305

SINGLE-USE ITEMS PREVENTED FROM GOING INTO LANDFILLS THROUGH OUR WORK WITH K-12 SCHOOLS

365

CONSUMER PRODUCTS TESTED FOR TOXIC CHEMICALS

59

ENTITIES SENT NOTICES OF VIOLATION

23

THE NUMBER OF COMPANIES WITH WHOM CEH REACHED LEGAL AGREEMENTS

\$500,000

IN DIRECT COMMUNITY INVESTMENT SECURED THROUGH HISTORIC LEGAL AGREEMENT WITH QUEMETCO, THE LAST LEAD-ACID BATTERY RECYCLER WEST OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

28

STATE AND FEDERAL BILLS SUPPORTED BY CEH

1,894

SIGNATURES ON OUR PETITION CALLING ON PRESIDENT BIDEN AND US EPA TO HOLD PFAS POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE IN NORTH CAROLINA



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## Green and Clean Purchasing



Through our eco-friendly purchasing program, CEH continued to make significant strides towards eliminating harmful chemicals such as carcinogens, reproductive toxicants, and endocrine disruptors from everyday products such as foodware used by K-12 schools and commercial furniture and flooring. CEH partners with a variety of large-scale purchasers such as corporations, school districts, universities, and government bodies, advising them on how to advocate for and procure healthier products such as: foodware, furniture, carpet and flooring, with safer chemistry.

By providing procurement officers, government officials and other staff with one-on-one consulting, customized technical assistance, webinars, and user-friendly product guides, CEH empowers organizations that are responsible for millions of dollars' worth of annual spending to make informed and healthier choices.

### GREENSCREEN CERTIFIED

Alongside Clean Production Action (CPA), CEH co-released the long-awaited **GreenScreen Certified standard for Reusable Food Packaging, Food Service Ware and Cookware**. This tool provides alternatives to eliminate many of the concerns associated with single-use containers, such as exposure to toxic chemicals including PFAS or “forever chemicals,” bisphenols (like BPA), and phthalates, which have been shown to affect fertility and have been linked to cardiovascular problems. The standard also sets clear criteria for reusability and requires strict testing to ensure any materials (including recycled materials) used in food packaging, service ware, cookware and food containers, contain no known hazardous chemicals. GreenScreen Certification is an essential tool to empower purchasers to identify products free of PFAS and other known chemicals of concern, shift manufacturers towards using safer chemistry, and protect our health during eating and cooking.

*“I applaud The Center for Environmental Health and Clean Production Action for establishing standards that put people and the*



planet first. This is a monumental step in creating systems that help us build a cleaner, greener future for the generations ahead.”  
– Manasa Mantravadi, Founder & CEO of stainless-steel dishware brand Ahimsa

SCHOOLS AND REUSABLES

In 2023, we built on our impact and push for a future of reusables by directly enlisting seven more Bay Area schools to serve youths on reusable stainless steel foodware. This represents just shy of 150,000 meals served on reusables, displacing over 600,000 single-use foodware items or over 10,000 pounds of single-use foodware not purchased (some found to be toxic by CEH). This work was a joint effort by CEH, StopWaste, the City of Fremont, Fremont Unified, Alameda Unified, Plastic Free Restaurants, and Ahimsa.



Our work with schools not only eliminates waste, but also fosters a mindset where students think about reusables, their health, and more upstream solutions, cementing their role as environmental stewards. Beyond our work in California, CEH has played an important role in accelerating the US movement toward reusables through national presentations, the dissemination of our [Ditching Disposables toolkit](#), and working directly with school champions in states like Massachusetts, North Carolina, Louisiana, Montana, and Washington.



## Green and Clean Purchasing (continued)



### CITYHEALTH INITIATIVE

Through policy guidance and providing resources and direct support to city leadership, CEH supported the CityHealth initiative in awarding 18 large US cities with medals for their achievements in eco-friendly purchasing. Eight cities, including Louisville, Minneapolis, New York, Phoenix, Portland, San Diego, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., earned the highest level of a gold medal. The medals are awarded for city laws that meet CityHealth's criteria for a number of policy areas that help promote health equity, such as affordable housing, access to greenspace, and more. Together with our partners, CEH is creating a framework and guidelines for cities to improve their health and environments and to drive the transformation of national markets through eco-friendly purchasing policies.

*"We are thrilled to see more than half of the largest cities across the country increasingly adopting health-oriented policies aimed at addressing pressing challenges that are faced by communities."*

– Katrina Forrest, JD, Co-Executive Director, CityHealth

### SAFE & HEALTHY FURNITURE



In 2023, CEH’s advocacy, manufacturer engagement, and education efforts around safer furniture resulted in increased production and availability of safer furniture options, with nearly 4,300 individual options now available to large purchasers (compared to only around 2,500 in 2020). CEH also updated and compiled all our furniture procurement tools into our [Toolkit for Healthier Office Furniture](#), which includes our technical specifications for furniture and fabric, our checklist for healthier furniture purchasing, and our purchaser’s pledge—our model commitment to selecting healthier furniture. All these resources make it easier for purchasers who are looking to transition to healthier furniture to access critical information all in one place, and it empowers those who have already committed to more safe and sustainable purchasing decisions throughout the course. CEH has directly influenced more than \$500 million in buying power annually towards safer furniture.

**i DID YOU KNOW**

### The “Hazardous Handful”

Antimicrobials

VOC's (including Formaldehyde)

PVC

Fluorinated Stain Treatments

Flame Retardants

Judy Levin

Healthier Furniture, Healthier Workplaces: Newly Developed Resources for Office Furniture Purchasers



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# Toxic Exposures and Pollution Prevention



CEH harnesses policy and legal tools, as well as our expertise in science and testing capabilities, to uncover and eliminate toxic threats from the indoor and outdoor environments we inhabit and the products we use every day.

For over 27 years, CEH has deployed one of our strongest strategies—public interest litigation—to protect consumers by forcing companies to remove toxic chemicals in the products they make or sell. In 2023, we reached legal agreements with twenty-three companies, requiring them to reduce or eliminate toxic consumer and environmental exposures and change the way they do business to protect consumers across a wide range of industries including fashion, food, and health and beauty.

CEH also partners with environmental justice groups, anti-toxics organizations and coalitions and resident leaders in front- and fenceline communities to take action against industrial facilities that release hazardous emissions into our air, water, and soil. Through regulatory advocacy and collaborative partnerships, CEH plays a key role in advancing health-protective laws, preventing harmful legislation that would undermine our existing environmental laws, and compelling the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other agencies to enforce existing laws and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels.

## **TOXIC ACCESSORIES GONE AT URBAN OUTFITTERS**

In line with CEH's expertise in testing clothing and fashion accessories, we tested eleven fashion accessory items from Urban Outfitter's Urban Renewal line, which claimed the products were "upcycled" and were "repurposing and reinventing sustainably-sourced vintage pieces." Our



testing found that over half the products tested had stunningly high levels of toxic lead and cadmium: up to 64% lead and 52% cadmium. Reuse and sustainability should not expose people to toxic chemicals, especially when there are no safe levels of these heavy metals.

CEH quickly distributed a petition calling on Urban Outfitters to ensure that what it is selling is safe for our health before it reaches store shelves. With an overwhelming response from our supporters, **Urban Outfitters removed lead and cadmium-tainted jewelry and fashion accessories** from its website just a week after CEH's announcement!

Urban Outfitters listened to the consumers that signed our petition demanding that the company prioritize people's health over their profit. But the fight isn't over: we are still waiting for Urban Outfitters to commit publicly and formally to basic product safety standards and testing to ensure that its products do not contain any lead or cadmium going forward.

*"Two decades after CEH began widespread jewelry testing, we are proud to say that most jewelry on store shelves does not have the lead and cadmium issues that the Urban Renewal line [had]."*

– Caitlin Moher, Research Manager at CEH

### **LEGAL AND POLICY ACTION ON PLASTICS**

CEH advanced a number of federal policy and legal actions to tackle the hazards of plastics and their contribution to the global waste crisis. Over the summer, CEH joined allies on Capitol Hill as part of the *Break Free From Plastics Hill Week*. Over several days, we met in person with dozens of federal lawmakers, led a virtual briefing, and hosted two Congressional convenings to advance legislative priorities such as **The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act (BFFPPA)**.



Among many other provisions, the [BFFPPA](#) would require plastics manufacturers to create, execute, and finance plans to reduce their plastic waste and phase out un-recyclable plastics by 2030. CEH and our coalition partners worked with Senator Merkley of Oregon to successfully re-introduce the Act in the 118th Congress, and we are committed to supporting its advancement during this session.

CEH and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) also remain engaged in a legal battle to prevent Inhance Technologies USA from generating PFAS when fluorinating plastic containers. Inhance fluorinates hundreds of millions of containers each year that are used to package consumer, commercial, and industrial products found throughout the economy. Alarming, several studies have shown that PFAS leaches from the plastic containers into their contents. Americans unknowingly use numerous fluorinated containers in their daily lives.

 DID YOU KNOW

CEH and PEER were successful in getting a group of twelve [lawmakers in Congress to sign on to a bipartisan letter](#) urging the EPA to comprehensively assess the risks and formation of PFAS created by the fluorination of plastics. By the end of 2023, [EPA had ordered Inhance to stop fluorination](#), but at the time of publication, this order had been vacated by an appeals court. Despite this setback, CEH and PEER continue to consider all options available to us to halt Inhance’s harmful fluorination of plastics.



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# Toxic Exposures and Pollution Prevention (continued)



## PFAS POLLUTION REDUCTION IN WATER

Groundwater is an important water source in California, yet it is often rendered unusable by environmental pollution. To help combat preventable contamination of this critical resource, CEH sent legal notices to a total of eight California facilities last year after data indicated significant levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) being discharged from the facilities into the groundwater. This included **five metal plating facilities in the Los Angeles area** and **three facilities in the San Francisco Bay Area**, where PFAS were found in some cases to surpass EPA's drinking water limits by more than 100 times.

Under Proposition 65, California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, facilities cannot discharge hazardous chemicals known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive harm into known sources of drinking water. CEH's legal action seeks to require these facilities to eliminate the source of PFAS and clean up their operations. It is also part of a national PFAS pollution reduction strategy that includes CEH's yearslong campaign with our partners to address PFAS contamination in the **Cape Fear River Region** of North Carolina.

*"We rely on groundwater to grow food, to quench our thirst, to keep our rivers full, and to keep green spaces, such as parks and forests, thriving. [ . . . ]. As such, we are taking legal action to halt this unchecked PFAS pollution and protect this precious resource."*

– Karina Gomez, Senior Manager of Community Engagement at CEH

## AIR MONITORING IN PARAMOUNT, CA

For years, CEH has been working alongside community partners in the predominantly Latine community of Paramount, California to protect their right to clean air. Nearby metal manufacturing facilities continue to emit dangerous levels of a heavy metal known as hexavalent



chromium (hex chrome), which is known to cause cancer, birth defects and reproductive harm, and damage to the kidneys, lungs, eyes, skin, liver, and respiratory system.

Last year, CEH completed a 10-month community-led air monitoring project that included working with residents to design an [English-Spanish webpage](#) which allows users to visualize and compare the results to the US EPA’s risk threshold for hex chrome air exposure. The air monitoring work continues through the Paramount Community and Environment (PACE) Initiative, which aims to increase awareness and engagement for a segment of the community that has often been left out of receiving linguistically and culturally appropriate information about hex chrome air pollution and other environmental health issues



As co-collaborators, CEH has offered technical expertise and guidance in the creation of Spanish-language outreach and programming including community workshops, educational materials, and surveys. Given less-than-ideal regulatory action, CEH remains committed to supporting residents’ efforts to ensure their right to clean air by enforcing the legally binding agreements that we previously secured with four chrome plating facilities.



## The Future of CEH Work: Full-Court Press



CEH continues to focus on reducing exposure to toxic chemicals in our air, water, soil, food, and the products we use every day. We are fighting to **protect** public health and **support** decision-makers by leading science-backed approaches that center prevention and remedy environmental injustice. We will double down on our commitment to **catalyze** solutions, drive public awareness, develop standards, craft policies, and litigate toward systemic change in our world.

Importantly, we will enhance our efforts to **prevent** the rollback of important public health and environmental protections, **enlist** local and national partners in our work to push for a future of healthier products, and will **implement** a strategic, integrated approach to eliminate PFAS “forever chemicals” pollution—considered by many to be the country’s worst environmental disaster yet.

Throughout CEH’s history, we have invested across our programs to tackle the PFAS lifecycle, from production and use to disposal. Today, our integrated PFAS strategies include partnering with large institutions and governments to influence national market trends towards the purchase of safer materials; exercising legal interventions such as litigation; launching evidence-based education campaigns, and advocating for health protective policies at the local, state and federal levels.



At the federal level, CEH is wielding the power of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) to reinvigorate our legal strategies. In 2016 CEH was part of a broad coalition of environmental health and justice organizations responsible for strengthening TSCA as a legal tool to protect public health. Among other things, the law requires most companies to report to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) what toxic chemicals they import into the U.S. When corporations withhold this data, EPA cannot provide local regulators with the information they need to protect their communities.

Moving forward, our enhanced focus on the enforcement of TSCA will help to fill in missing data gaps to empower local governments, community-based organizations, and first responders to act to keep people safe and to more fully participate in the decision-making processes that impact their lives.

CEH is also advocating for the Biden Administration to make good on its commitments in its PFAS Strategic Roadmap. This includes federal agencies’ compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Environmental Justice Executive Orders. Through our participation in the Title VI Alliance, we have made recommendations to EPA and other federal agencies on how they can better protect communities from environmental racism.

One key victory came on April 10, 2024, when EPA issued drinking water standards for certain PFAS chemicals, which will save thousands of lives and prevent tens of thousands of serious illnesses. The new drinking water standards, which cover six of the most studied PFAS chemicals, fulfill President Biden’s Environmental Justice promise to PFAS-contaminated communities, such as southeastern North Carolina and South Los Angeles.

As a result of our efforts to stop PFAS pollution, we have increased public awareness, driven regulatory action, and ensured that impacted communities are represented and receive well-deserved remediation. CEH will continue to push governments to enact strong policies on PFAS to safeguard our health and that of future generations.

While we continue to build on our tremendous legacy work, we are laser-focused on exponentially expanding our impact and demanding a national, full-court press to fight the ubiquitous problem of forever chemicals in our everyday lives!



## Press Page



20 FEBRUARY, 2023

### VINYL CHLORIDE’S INVISIBLE THREAT: THOUSANDS OF POUNDS ARE RELEASED EVERY YEAR IN THE U.S. AS PART OF “POISON PLASTIC” MANUFACTURING

Vinyl chloride entered the spotlight after the Feb. 3 [Ohio train derailment](#). But the [hazardous substance](#) has been around for decades and is everywhere — from buildings and vehicle upholstery to children’s toys and kitchen supplies — and factories have been emitting the EPA-designated toxic chemical into the air for years.

14 FEBRUARY, 2023

### NO RULING YET AS IMPACTED COMMUNITIES PLEA FOR EPA TO GRANT PFAS TESTING IN FEDERAL HEARING

Nearly 50 Cape Fear locals and activists, all affected in different ways from toxic pollution, crowded a Wilmington courtroom Tuesday morning to hear arguments on litigation involving PFAS testing.

12 MARCH, 2023

### YOUR URBAN OUTFITTERS JEWELRY MIGHT HAVE TOXIC LEVELS OF LEAD IN IT

A new report finds that some Urban Outfitter jewelry contains shockingly high levels of lead, which can cause cancer, lung problems, and birth defects.

18 MAY, 2023



## THREE FACILITIES LEAKING TOXIC ‘FOREVER CHEMICALS’ INTO BAY AREA GROUNDWATER

Three facilities in the Bay Area, including this one in Berkeley, were found to be discharging harmful chemicals into the groundwater beneath them.

18 MAY, 2023

## A GROWING NUMBER OF SPORTS BRAS, SHIRTS AND LEGGINGS BRANDS FOUND WITH HIGH LEVELS OF TOXIC CHEMICAL, WATCHDOG WARNS

An increasing number of sports bra and athletic wear brands have been found with high levels of **BPA** in them, a chemical compound that’s used to make certain types of plastic and can lead to harmful health effects such as asthma, cardiovascular disease and obesity, a watchdog group said on Wednesday.

01 SEPTEMBER, 2023

## IS IT SAFE TO REUSE PLASTIC TAKE-OUT CONTAINERS?

And what about putting them in the dishwasher or the microwave?



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# A Heartfelt Tribute



With the support of many people, Michael Green courageously founded CEH on his credit card in 1996. After 26 years of transformational leadership, safeguarding the health of millions of people in their daily lives, Michael stepped down as CEO at the end of 2022.

On May 5th, 2023, nearly 200 of CEH's closest friends, supporters, and community partners gathered in an evening of celebration to honor Michael and his audacious legacy. Some of CEH's biggest champions – including actress and director, Sarah Wayne Callies – took to the stage to share special remarks on CEH's far-reaching impact and the importance of continuing our mission to protect individuals and communities from toxic exposures.

Joy, laughter, and gratitude filled the room as the speakers reflected on CEH's trajectory and the incredible work accomplished over many years. Other friends shared their personal stories about Michael and CEH's life-changing impact through video messages, which were compiled into the heartfelt tribute video below.



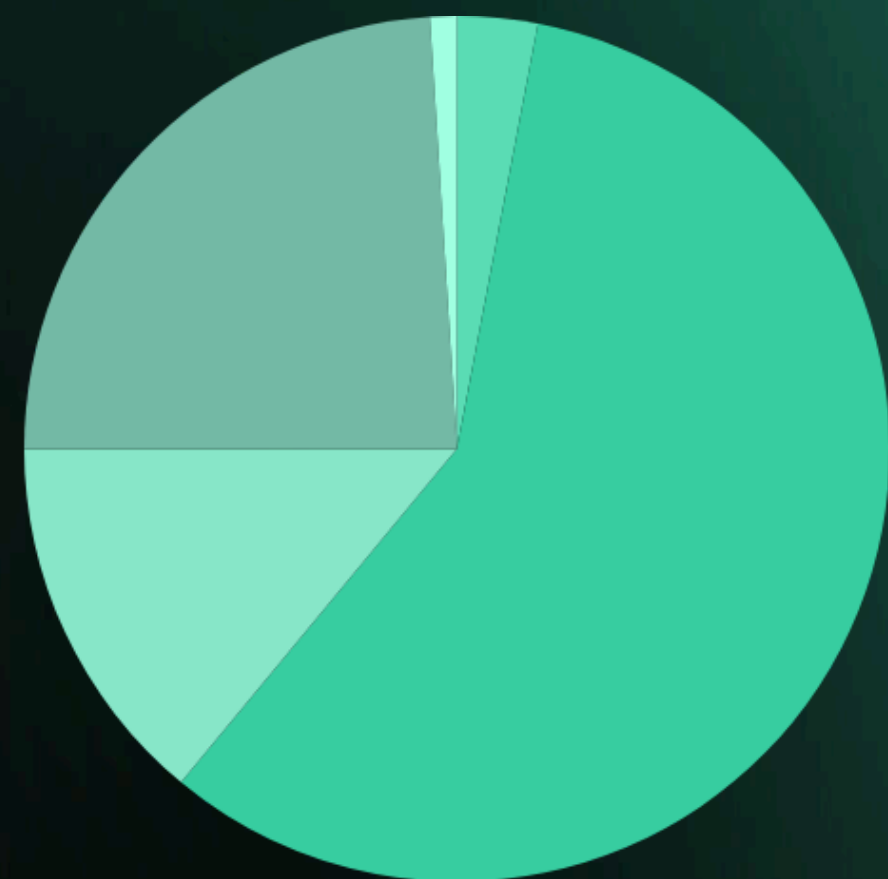
Later that year, CEH's staff, Board, and supporters (old and new) enthusiastically welcomed Kizzy Charles-Guzman as the new CEO.

In Michael's own words: "I deeply admire Kizzy and her work as a champion of sustainability and climate leadership. I am certain that under her leadership, CEH will continue to have profound and measurable success for years to come."

Thank you, Michael, and to all of you who are part of CEH's remarkable story.

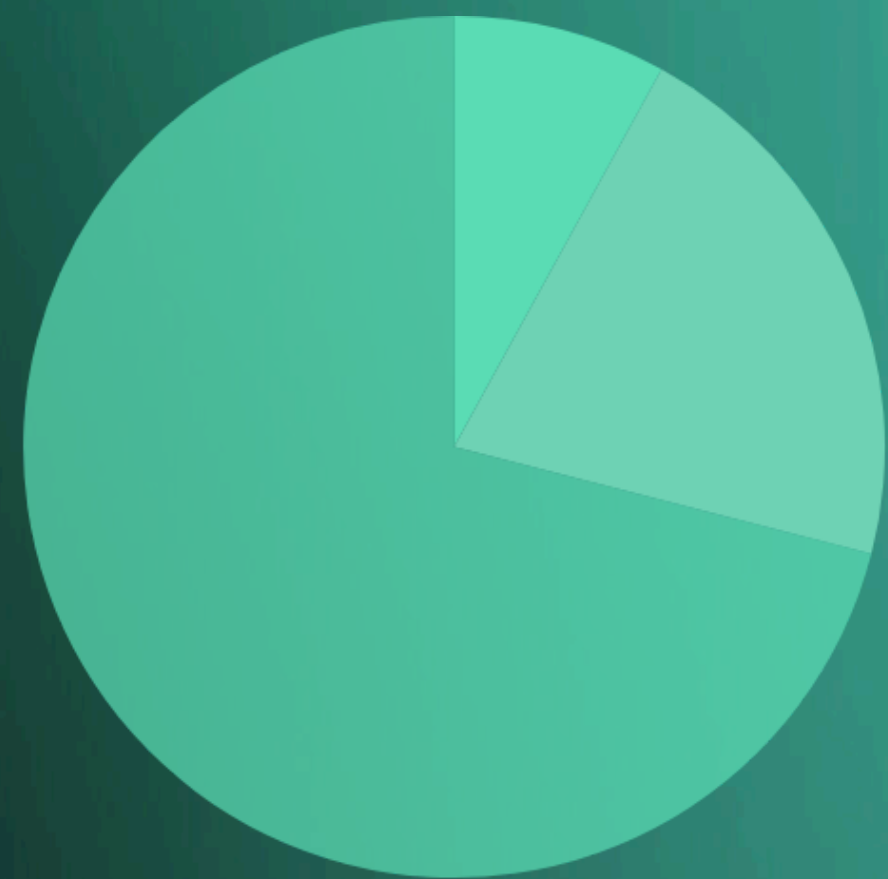


# Financial Statement



■ Testing & Fees for Service 3% ■ Grants 58% ■ Contributions & Events 14%  
■ Legal Awards 24% ■ Other Income 1%

2023 REVENUE



■ Management & Operations 8% ■ Fundraising 21%  
■ Programs 71%

2023 EXPENSES



# Donor Roll

*"I love the Big Greens too, but I support CEH because it's an institution where my donation is a bigger piece of the pie and because CEH's creative, far-reaching work protects us from a reckless, greed-driven industry that harms us all."*

- Charlie Pizarro, CEH donor and partner since 2005

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*“The cementing of Kizzy Charles-Guzman’s leadership of CEH is a transformational moment for the organization—and the world. I am confident that CEH’s bold vision, passion, and tenacity will continue to create major wins for public health as we work to ensure that all of us are protected from the most dangerous toxic threats in our environment.”*

- Rob Rosenheck, CEH Board President

ROB ROSENHECK

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# Get Involved



## SUPPORT

Your support fuels CEH's bold work to fight against the companies and industries that knowingly expose individuals, children, and entire communities to life-threatening toxic chemicals. Thanks to champions like you, we can develop safer products standards for institutional and government purchasers, and we can also advocate for health-protective policies at the local, state and federal levels. The Center for Environmental Health is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the Federal Tax ID# 94-3251981.

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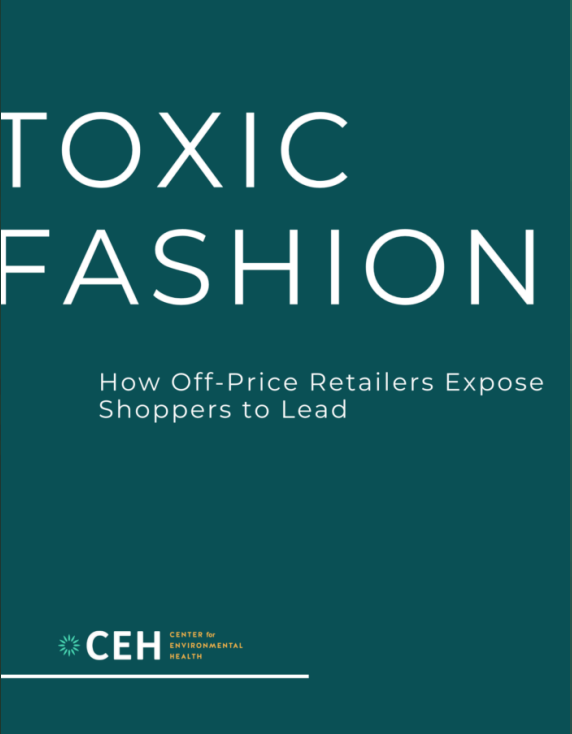
## LEARN



On March 12, 2024, CEH published a groundbreaking [Toxic Fashion Report](#) detailing a systemic toxics problem at Ross and Burlington.

Over the last decade, CEH has notified retailers Burlington, Marshalls, Nordstrom Rack, Ross, and TJ Maxx nearly 500 times that they were selling specific fashion accessories containing elevated levels of lead. Lead can cause cancer, reproductive issues, and neurological harm. Ross and Burlington accounted for over 300 of those notices, and they continue to put consumers at risk despite knowledge of toxic chemicals in their supply chains. There is no safe level of lead exposure.

“Ross and Burlington are examples of a toxic fashion issue at off-price retailers that cater especially to lower-income consumers. All off-price retailers must stop exposing workers and consumers to lead in their products,” said Caitlin Moher and Martin Bañuelos, the report’s co-authors. “There is no benefit to lead being in handbags, wallets, shoes, or belts.”



**ACT**

Take action NOW by signing our petition to tell Ross and Burlington: Stop Exposing Your Customers and Workers to Toxic Lead!

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