FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 21, 2011

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Youth Sue State Agencies to Preserve the Future and Halt Climate Change

Youth appeal decision denying petition to reduce carbon emissions and prevent climate catastrophe

De Moines, IA — Glori Dei Filippone, a 13 year-old member of Kids vs Global Warming, filed for judicial review today of the Department of Natural Resources’ denial of their petition to force action on climate change. Specifically, the rulemaking petition requests the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Air Quality Bureau to reduce statewide carbon dioxide (CO\textsubscript{2}) emissions from fossil fuels consistent with what current scientific analysis deems necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change.

“My generation has a profound interest in ensuring that the climate remains stable enough so that we have a livable future,” stressed Glori. “I have nightmares about the environmental damage humans are doing to our planet. Youth across the world are standing up to demand change because our leaders are failing us. I joined this legal action to demand my government to stop giving in to political pressures or fears about changing our outdated economy or agricultural system and to take the urgent action needed to guarantee the survival of future generations.”

As part of the iMatter Campaign, the petition was filed on May 4\textsuperscript{th} in conjunction with legal actions in 47 other states, the District of Columbia, and against the federal government on behalf of youth to compel reductions of CO\textsubscript{2} emissions that will counter the negative impacts of climate change. The petition relies upon the long established legal principle of the Public Trust Doctrine that requires all branches of the government to protect and maintain certain shared resources fundamental for human health and survival. Science, not politics, defines the fiduciary obligation that the government, as the trustee, must fulfill on behalf of the beneficiary—the public.

Dr. James Hansen, a prominent and widely respected climate scientist, has warned that our window of opportunity is quickly closing to take serious action to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. “The Public Trust Doctrine requires the Department of Natural Resources and the Air Quality Bureau, as trustees, to protect and preserve vital natural resources, including the atmosphere, for both present and future generations of Iowans,” stated attorney Channing Dutton.

Iowa is already suffering from severe impacts of climate change right now—floods, droughts, and heat waves. The U.S. Global Change Research Program states in its 2009 report, Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States, that with rising high temperatures, extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall, droughts, and heat waves, will become more frequent and severe. These impacts have a negative effect on plants and wildlife, human health, and the...
According to a recent report by the Iowa Climate Change Impacts Committee, “the 2008 floods presented one of the most devastating natural disasters in our state’s history.” Floods are a growing problem in Iowa and “create many health hazards in addition to deaths caused by rising waters,” such as the mobilization of chemical pollutants and hazardous waste and exposure to mold and carbon monoxide during cleanup.

To protect Earth’s natural systems, the best available science shows that average global surface heating must not exceed 1° C and concentrations of atmospheric CO₂ must decline to less than 350 ppm this century. We are currently at around 390 ppm. To accomplish this reduction, Dr. Hansen and other renowned scientists conclude that global CO₂ emissions need to peak in 2012 and decline by 6% per year starting in 2013. The rulemaking petition seeks a rule that would require a reduction of statewide CO₂ emissions at these levels. Dr. Hansen’s recent paper is available at: www.ourchildrenstrust.org/sites/default/files/20110505_CaseForYoungPeople.pdf.

On June 21, 2011, at a hearing on the petition in Des Moines, Glori asked Iowa's Department of Natural Resources to take a courageous step and implement a scientifically-viable climate action plan to protect all of our futures. She boldly challenged the adequacy of the current system in protecting her future as she concluded her presentation. “I beg the commission to consider these final questions before you deny this petition: How does the existing system protect me and my future? How does what we’re doing match up to the science? Are you certain you’re doing enough?”

“To answer Glori’s questions, Iowa is not doing enough,” said Victoria Loorz, co-founder, with her 16-year-old son Alec, of the non-profit Kids vs Global Warming and the iMatter Campaign. “We have a moral duty to provide our children and our children’s children with a livable planet, and our governments must live up to their responsibility to ensure that this happens. We need to live NOW as if our children’s future matters and end our reliance on fossil fuels.”

**Our Children's Trust** is a nonprofit focused on protecting earth’s natural systems for current and future generations. We are here to empower and support youth as they stand up for their lawful inheritance: a healthy planet. We are mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers. We are adults, part of the ruling generation, and we care about the future of our children—and their children's children. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/

**iMatter** is a youth-led campaign of the nonprofit group, Kids vs Global Warming, that is focused on mobilizing and empowering youth to lead the way to a sustainable and just world. We are teens and moms and young activists committed to raising the voices of the youngest generation to issue a wake-up call to live, lead and govern as if our future matters. www.imattermarch.org/

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