



National League for Nursing



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CLIMATE for HEALTH



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Date: 04/14/2020

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## 19 Health and Medical Organizations Strongly Oppose EPA's Move to Keep Weak Limits on Particle Pollution, Placing Health of Millions at Risk

*EPA's proposal ignores the current science and the opportunity to prevent harm to health*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 14, 2020) – In response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposal to maintain the current National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter, the American Lung Association, the Allergy & Asthma Network, the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environment, the American Heart Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Thoracic Society, the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Children's Environmental Health Network, Climate for Health, Health Care Without Harm, the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the National League for Nursing, the National Medical Association, the National WIC Association, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Public Health Institute issued the following statement:

“The scientific evidence is clear: the nation needs stronger limits on particulate matter air pollution to protect public health. We are disappointed with EPA’s proposal to keep the current, inadequate standards for this lethal pollutant in place, and we call on the agency to follow the science and finalize stronger standards into law.

“EPA has proposed keeping both the current annual standard and the 24-hour standard for particulate matter, arguing that the current standards provide sufficient protection for human health. However, there is powerful, overwhelming evidence that shows that neither of these standards is adequate to safeguard the health of Americans. EPA’s proposal violates the core purpose of these standards under the Clean Air Act: to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety.

“Particle pollution is dangerous. It can cause breathing trouble, asthma attacks, COPD exacerbations, heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer, and premature death. Anyone can suffer health harms from particulate matter, but millions of people face greater risk – including the more than 16.4 million adults with COPD and more than 24.8 million Americans with asthma, including 5.5 million children. [New evidence](#) shows that African-Americans face a three-time higher risk from PM than the entire population.

“The process that EPA used to arrive at its proposal to keep the current standards was deeply flawed. Ordinarily, the agency assembles a panel of expert scientists to help comb through the recent research and recommend pollution limits that protect the public. This time, EPA Administrator Wheeler disbanded the expert panel and restricted the full discussion and review of the science that shows the full health harms of particle pollution. EPA also rushed to complete its review on an unreasonably tight timeline that did not allow for adequate consideration of the scientific evidence.

“The current annual limit on particulate matter is 12 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). Recent U.S. studies and Canadian studies find evidence of premature deaths down to and below 8  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . A [large study from 2017](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association looking at short-term exposures to air pollution in older adults also added evidence of harm below the current annual standard. Furthermore, strong evidence exists that the 24-hour standard also fails to provide adequate protection for public health.

“We know that particle pollution is deadly, and that the current limits do not sufficiently protect Americans – especially children with asthma and adults with lung and heart disease.”

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### **About the American Lung Association**

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to champion clean air for all; to improve the quality of life for those with lung disease and their families; and to create a tobacco-free future. For more information about the American Lung Association, a holder of the coveted 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Gold-Level GuideStar Member, or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: [Lung.org](http://Lung.org).

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