

October 28, 2022

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders of national health, medical and nursing organizations, we thank you for the ambitious goals set early in your administration to review and propose regulations to cut pollution and curb the greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. Mr. President, we appreciate your continued commitment to advancing equity and the recognition that the burdens of pollution and climate change fall disproportionately on people of color and low-income communities. Our organizations are committed to environmental justice and believe there are several key actions that must be taken this year to protect the most vulnerable.

The health community is looking forward to the implementation of stronger air and climate emissions rules. We are concerned, however, that progress on key regulations at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is delayed. We want your administration to promulgate ambitious and durable rules. We acknowledge that crafting robust rules requires resources and time and we also recognize that the agency is operating under a budget that has not received needed increases. But we are concerned that further delay on key regulations will continue to leave health at risk.

The Mercury and Air Toxics standards (MATS) was an early priority for your administration. Mercury, acid gases and other hazardous air pollutants from power plants can cause cancer, decrease pulmonary function and damage lungs, kidneys and the central nervous system. The health impacts are particularly egregious for children and infants. It is shocking and disappointing that even now, two and half years after the previous administration took actions that could undermine the ability to regulate these toxic pollutants, this administration still has not finalized the reinstatement of the appropriate and necessary finding for the MATS. The deadline included in the regulatory agenda for MATS is listed at the end of the year. We are disappointed that the rule was pushed this late and urge its release as soon as possible.

We appreciate the decision to reconsider the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for both particulate matter (PM) and ozone. The health community opposed the previous administration's decision not to strengthen the standards, pointing to science that exposes the current levels for being too weak to protect health. We have been anxiously waiting for the PM NAAQS proposal and are disappointed to see the timeline slip past the August schedule. Similarly, we are concerned that review of the ozone NAAQS appears to be far behind schedule. NAAQS take years to implement and delaying the proposals any further could mean a perpetuation of health impacts stemming from soot and smog pollution, especially in frontline communities. We urge you to direct EPA to promptly complete the reconsideration of the PM NAAQS no later than March 2023 and the ozone NAAQS no later than December 2023.

Emissions from the oil and gas industry are not just a driver of climate change, they also impact health immediately. Pollutants released alongside methane can worsen asthma symptoms and increase the risk of cancer, developmental and neurological disorders. EPA's forthcoming supplemental proposal on standards for new and existing sources of oil and natural gas is necessary to address the climate impacts of methane and will help protect families who live adjacent to oil and gas operations. We appreciate EPA's commitment to improving the original proposal and urge quick release of the supplemental to prevent further delay, ensuring that the rule is final by May 2023.

The transportation sector is another major contributor to air and climate pollution. Despite representing only 6% of the on-road fleet as of 2020, medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (MHDV) generate 59% of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions. Strengthening the NOx standards for MHDV would improve health for millions of people, and Option 1 in EPA's cleaner trucks proposal is the stronger option for pollution reduction and public health. Communities need significant pollution reduction from freight trucks. We appreciate the administration's commitment to transition to a zero-emission transportation sector. The American Lung Association's "Delivering Clean Air"¹ report released this month found the U.S. could achieve \$735 billion in public health benefits in communities near major truck routes due to zero-emission trucks and power. We urge the finalization of stronger NOx standards as soon as possible, no later than the end of 2022, and for the administration to complete the Phase 3 greenhouse gas truck standards that will drive the fleet to zero emission in 2023.

Mr. President, your commitment to environmental justice, protecting public health from air pollution and addressing climate change is greatly appreciated by the health community. We urge you to act quickly and without further delay to issue proposals and final rules for these regulations so that improvements to health can be achieved sooner.

Sincerely,

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¹ American Lung Association. Delivering Clean Air: Health Benefits of Zero-Emission Trucks. Oct 2022.
www.lung.org/ev

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