



February 1, 2023

Detroit Board of Zoning

Re: Asthma concerns regarding appeal in BZA case # 1-23 for 4445 Lawton St.

boardofzoning@detroitmi.gov

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) and the AAFA Michigan Chapter, we are writing to convey our concerns regarding the appeal in BZA case #123 for 4445 Lawton St. AAFA is the leading patient organization advocating for people with asthma and allergies, and the oldest asthma and allergy patient group in the world.

Given the already dangerous levels of particle pollution and the burden of asthma experienced by the people of Detroit, we urge you to take into account the proposed facility's potential impact on people with asthma. In addition to other environmental pollutants, concrete crushers can release "fugitive dust" – essentially, particulate matter that can greatly aggravate asthma and other lung conditions. We urge you to protect community health by considering how a new source of pollution in a low-income residential neighborhood could exacerbate Detroit's already deeply troubling asthma epidemic.

Unfortunately, Detroit is heavily impacted by asthma. In our 2022 Asthma Capitals™ Report, Detroit was the #1 asthma capital of the country, with the highest overall combination of asthma prevalence, emergency department visits due to asthma attacks, and asthma mortality. Our Asthma Capitals™ Report analyzes data to rank the largest 100 cities in the U.S. based on where it is most challenging to live with asthma.<sup>1</sup> We noted that along with multiple other contributing factors, Detroit

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<sup>1</sup> AAFA, Asthma Capitals 2022: The Most Challenging Places to Live with Asthma (2022). Available at <https://www.aafa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/aafa-2022-asthma-capitals-report.pdf>



received a failing score from the American Lung Association for high ozone days and particle pollution.<sup>2</sup>

There are 25 million children and adults living with asthma in the United States. Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous people experience the heaviest burden of the disease: Black Americans are almost 1.5 times as likely to have asthma as white Americans, and Puerto Rican Americans are nearly twice as likely.<sup>3</sup> Black Americans are three times as likely to die from asthma than white Americans, and five times more likely to be treated for asthma in an emergency room.<sup>4</sup> These profound disparities are driven by social factors – including lower income levels, barriers to healthcare, medical mistrust, and environmental pollution – perpetuated by structural racism. We recently launched a community-based program in Detroit to address these disparities. We hope that the zoning board recognizes the significant challenges the Detroit asthma community faces, and upholds the permit denial in the case of BZA case # 1-23 for 4445 Lawton St.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Mendez  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of  
America

Kathleen Slonager, RN, AE-C, CCH  
Executive Director  
Asthma & Allergy Foundation of  
America - Michigan Chapter

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<sup>2</sup> American Lung Association. (2022). State of the Air Report 2022.

<https://www.lung.org/research/sota>

<sup>3</sup> AAFA, Asthma Disparities in America (2020). Available at <https://aafa.org/asthma-allergy-research/our-research/asthma-disparities-burden-on-minorities/>

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*