



Clean Air is a Public Health Imperative

Extensive research links long-term exposure to PM2.5, ozone, and household air pollution to premature death and diseases like heart disease, stroke, COPD, lung cancer, type 2 diabetes, and respiratory infections (1). Delaying clean air policies, such as the transition away from fossil fuels in the transportation and building sectors, are detrimental to the health of our communities.

The undersigned health organizations support efforts to reduce pollution from high-emitting sectors to protect health, close disparities, and keep solutions affordable for New Jerseyans.

For every dollar invested in air pollution control since the Clean Air Act, there has been an estimated \$30 returned to the economy (2). Despite this progress, air pollution is still responsible for 5-10% of premature mortality in the United States, underscoring the need to continue the transition away from fossil-fuels (3). Traffic-related air pollution, especially from vehicles like cars, buses, and trucks, releases a dangerous mix of pollutants that contribute to adverse health effects (4). Diesel exposure has been shown to exacerbate clinical symptoms in children with asthma (5). In New Jersey, more than 136,000 children are affected by asthma, with overburdened areas like Essex, Camden, and Cumberland counties experiencing some of the highest rates of asthma-related emergency room visits in the state (6,7).

Transitioning away from fossil fuel power sources not only reduces carbon pollution but also improves air quality by decreasing ground-level ozone (8). The transportation, building, and power generation sectors are the largest contributors to New Jersey's greenhouse gas emissions inventory (9). Vulnerable populations, particularly overburdened communities exposed to more pollution sources, face a demonstrably higher risk of health complications, and these communities continue to lack the resources and representation necessary to manage these conditions effectively (10,11).

Indoor air pollution from combustion-based appliances such as methane gas stoves and furnaces also contributes to harmful pollutants, including air toxics and nitrogen oxides, which increase the risk of asthma attacks and reduce lung function (12). Particulate matter

is linked to negative cardiovascular health outcomes, including higher blood pressure and heart failure (13). Emerging research has also identified a connection between air pollution and neurological disorders like dementia and neurological development in children (14).

We stand in strong support of the following recommendations that will reduce the risk of adverse health outcomes for New Jersey communities:

- **Protect the Advanced Clean Truck Standards:** The health community applauds the enactment of ACT, but it is essential these protections continue to be funded, implemented, and enforced. The transition to electric vehicles is linked to positive health outcomes and reduced emissions (15). ACT protects vulnerable communities that are disproportionately exposed to pollutants from combustion engines while also achieving long-term savings on fuel and maintenance for fleets and businesses.
- **Accelerate the Transition to Energy-Efficient Buildings:** Indoor air pollution can be 2-5 times worse than outdoor air due to a variety of sources, with one of the major contributors being the combustion of traditional heating fuels (12). Increased adoption of zero direct emission sources such as electric heat pumps and electric induction stoves reduce exposure to harmful pollutants, while also meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets. Energy-efficient appliance upgrades, and weatherizing homes, also provide long-term energy savings for ratepayers. It is critical that financial assistance and incentives are prioritized for low-income households to ensure these benefits are accessible and upfront cost barriers are minimized.
- **Stay Committed to Clean Energy Sources:** New Jersey needs reliable electricity sources that also benefit the environment and health. Improving the interconnection of low carbon, clean energy solutions especially offshore wind and solar will help protect fence line communities and all New Jerseyans from the damage caused by fossil fuel power plants.
- **Invest in A Reliable Grid:** The transition to zero emission transportation and buildings is dependent on a reliable grid that can interconnect clean energy projects and charging stations. These investments must avoid driving up costs for ratepayers by reconsidering current rate design and continuing to encourage energy conservation behind the meter.
- **Empower Communities with Better Monitoring Networks:** There are only 29 air monitoring stations in the entire state of New Jersey - with only four stations that measure air toxics. Not all counties have air monitors, and the stationary monitors may fail to capture local air pollution. Investing in low-cost, community monitoring networks will increase transparency and provide localized data estimates for under

monitored pollutants. It is crucial community feedback is actively integrated in the monitoring and implementation processes. Communities should also have opportunities to learn about and engage with sensors and data networks. Funding opportunities and pilots should prioritize education, training, and employment, especially in the most overburdened areas, to further support involvement in community science sensor-based projects.

- **Secure Long-Term Funding for Health Programs:** With federal cuts impacting New Jersey's local health departments and programs, it is essential legislators secure long-term, stable funding. Given the clear and enormous threat presented by climate change, New Jersey must create a climate change division with the Department of Health, as other states have done. Local programs play an essential role in monitoring adverse health effects from environmental exposures. Sustained funding ensures that critical health protections are not compromised and that underserved communities receive continued support without financial barriers.

The health community urges our leaders to stay committed to improving air quality, dramatically driving down New Jersey's carbon footprint, and rejecting efforts to delay protections.

Organizations:

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

American Lung Association

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Clinicians for Climate Action New Jersey

New Jersey Society for Public Health Education

New Jersey Thoracic Society – ATS Chapter

The Center for Health Equity & Wellbeing- NJ's Public Health Institute

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