January 16, 2024

Mr. John Podesta
Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Senior Advisor Podesta and Administrator Regan,

We, the undersigned organizations, once again call for you to finalize a substantial strengthening of EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particulate matter pollution (PM 2.5), also known as soot. EPA's review of the science shows exposure to fine particle pollution causes a range of health harms, such as increased infant mortality, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, asthma attacks, diabetes, dementia, and premature death. But these harms are not equitably spread: they are most acute in the communities that we live and work in. EPA's own analysis shows that Black populations and Latino/a populations die from fine particle pollution at up to 3 times the rate than other populations.

The scientific evidence supporting our request has only grown stronger since the proposed rule was published. A recent study published in the New England Journal of Medicine by researchers at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health analyzing Medicare data has highlighted the critical role that a strong soot standard would have in saving lives in our communities. According to the study, while lower PM2.5 exposure was associated with lower mortality in the full population, historically marginalized subpopulations, both in terms of race and income, benefited more as PM2.5 levels decreased from 12 to 8 μg/m3. Put simply, the stronger the PM2.5 NAAQS, the more the environmental health disparities narrow.

As organizations that have dedicated our work to improving environmental justice in our communities, we are concerned that delay in issuing the final rule might signal a potential waver in the Administration's commitment to protecting vulnerable communities from air pollution. As we have said in prior comments and letters, and as the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council wrote in June, adoption of strong standards at the lowest end of the recommended range would make

tremendous strides in delivering on your administration’s promise to prioritize environmental justice in your decision making. Finalizing a rule at 10 μg/m³—the highest end of EPA’s proposal—would be seen as a major disappointment.

It has been over three months since EPA sent its final soot rule to OMB for interagency review. And we know that since it has been there, the Administration has been the target of a considerable pressure campaign from industry against the rule. That campaign rests on erroneous premises³. The Administration must not yield to it. Instead, the Administration must keep its commitments, follow the science, and, in doing so, promote environmental justice. EPA’s decision on the soot standard is a generational chance to save lives and fulfill the promise of the Clean Air Act to communities that historically been overlooked by clean air standards. Millions of Americans are counting on the EPA to advance solutions for pollution that protect our environment and right to clean air⁴. We urge you to move this year to finalize stronger, more protective primary standards for particle pollution.

Sincerely,

350 Bay Area Action
350 Chicago
7 Directions of Service
7th Generation Advisors
Action Now
Adirondack Council
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Academy of Family Practice
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc
Appalachian Voices
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Breathe Project
California Communities Against Toxics
California Interfaith Power and Light

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California Safe Schools
Cease Fire Campaign
Center for Biological Diversity
Central California Asthma Collaborative
Change the Chamber
Clean Air Action Network
Clean Air Action Network of Glens Falls
Clean Air Coalition of Greater Ravena-Coeymans
Clean Air Council
Clean Water Action Council of NE WI
Coalition For A Safe Environment
Coalition for Clean Air
ColorBrightonGreen
Comité Diálogo Ambiental
Comité Poro Uno
Community Advocate
Concerned Health Professionals of Pennsylvania
Congressman Troy A. Carter
Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice
Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Don't Waste Arizona
Downwinders at Risk
Earth Ethics, Inc.
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
Ecology Center
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Integrity Project
Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform
Extinction Rebellion Delaware
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Fossil Free Tompkins
Franciscan Action Network
GASP
George Washington University
Grassroots Environmental Education
Green New Deal Virginia
Green The Church
GreenFaith
GreenLatinos
Ironbound Community Corporation
JF Environmental Trust Foundation
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Locust Point Community Garden
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
Maine Youth Action
Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action
Moms Clean Air Force
M-W & Associates
Natural Resources Council of Maine
New York Public Interest Research Group
Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Passionist Solidarity Network
People Demanding Action, NJ Chapter
Port Arthur Community Action Network
Port of Los Angeles High School
Rachel Carson Council
Rise St. James
Rise Up West Virginia
Rise4EJ
San Pedro & Peninsula Homeowners Coalition
Santa Fe Forest Coalition
SEE (Social Eco Education)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Slingshot
Society of Native Nations
Southern Environmental Law Center
Stand.earth
Stop OAK Expansion Coalition
Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (SAPE)
Sunflower Alliance
Terra Advocati
texas environmental justice advocacy services
The Descendants Project
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Disease
The Plastic Solutions Fund
The Quantum Institute
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
United Wilmington Youth Foundation
Valley Watch, Inc.
West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs
West Long Beach Association
White Rabbit Grove RDNA