



July 12, 2022

The Honorable Tom Carper, Chairman
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito:

The American Lung Association supports S. 1345, the Comprehensive National Mercury Monitoring Act; S. 2476, the Environmental Justice Air Quality Monitoring Act of 2021; and the Public Health Air Quality Act.

According to the Lung Association's 2022 "State of the Air" report, more than four in ten Americans – over 137 million people – live in places with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. The report also found that people of color were 61% more likely than white people to live in a county with at least one failing grade for levels of air pollution, and 3.6 times as likely to be living in a county with failing grades for all three measures in the report.

The Clean Air Act is a public health success story as documented in our "State of the Air" report over the past two decades and in EPA's Trends Report. Thanks to the law, levels of dangerous outdoor air pollutants have dropped dramatically since 1990 while the economy has grown. However, "State of the Air" shows two challenges to the nation's air quality progress overall. First, climate change is beginning to undo the air quality progress the nation has made by contributing to higher ozone levels and more wildfire smoke-driven particle pollution in much of the country. Second, the burden of air pollution is not equally shared, nor is air quality progress. Too many communities, including those near air pollution sources, are still waiting for the promise of healthy air to be delivered. And far too often, the air pollution monitoring network does not adequately show pollution levels in frontline communities especially low-income communities and communities of color.

These bills would help address these ongoing challenges by building on the Clean Air Act to provide additional monitoring and cleanup to further improve lung health.

S. 1345, the Comprehensive National Mercury Monitoring Act, would improve understanding of the full scope of the burden of mercury pollution. Research has long shown that toxic pollution emitted by power plants, including mercury, is especially dangerous because of the harm it can cause to the respiratory, cardiovascular, nervous, endocrine, and other essential life systems within humans. Millions of people nationwide face special risk, including infants, children and teenagers; older adults; pregnant people; people of color; and people with low incomes. This legislation to monitor mercury, paired with efforts to reduce air toxics emissions at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, can help protect public health.

S. 2476, the Environmental Justice Air Quality Monitoring Act, would improve the understanding of local levels of air pollution, particularly in underserved communities. Historically underinvested communities and communities of color are more likely to be located near pollution sources. A 2022 study found that neighborhoods in which the federal government discouraged investment nearly 100 years ago – via a racist practice known as redlining – face higher levels of air pollution today, including nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter pollution.¹ Better understanding local levels of air pollution is an important step toward meeting the urgent need of meaningful pollution reductions in communities facing the greatest burden.

Finally, the Public Health Air Quality Act would expand air quality monitoring and help ensure targeted cleanup of dangerous air pollution. The bill addresses a suite of dangerous pollutants, including expanding monitoring requirements for facilities whose emission contribute to cancer risk and investing in additional monitors that track levels of ozone, particulate matter and other dangerous ambient air pollution. This bill would improve lung health and environmental justice.

The Lung Association supports these three pieces of legislation and their aims of improving lung health by monitoring and reducing dangerous air pollution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Wimmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Harold P. Wimmer
National President and CEO

¹ Lane, HM, Morello-Frosch R, Marshall JD, Apte JS (Lane et al.) 2022. Historical Redlining is Associated with Present-Day Air Pollution Disparities in U.S. Cities. Environmental Science & Technology Letters.