

July 23, 2020

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC

RE: An amendment to the Environment and Interior Division of H.R. 7608, the first appropriations minibus for Fiscal Year 2021

Dear Representative:

Our organizations write to express strong support for Amendment 62 put forward by Representatives Blunt Rochester, Rush, and McEachin, which would block EPA from finalizing its do-nothing update to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM 2.5, also known as soot. This administration's failure to follow the science and listen to the medical experts will disproportionately harm lower-income families and communities of color, who are more likely to live in areas that fail to meet federal clean air standards, and who are experiencing higher than average rates of death and sickness from the COVID-19 pandemic because of their exposure to unsafe local air.

Soot is an extremely dangerous pollutant, a deadly mix of metals, chemicals, and acid gases that are so small they can be inhaled deeply into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. There are ample peer-reviewed studies clearly showing that a stronger standard is justified and would save many lives. EPA's data estimates that even if the air quality around the country met the existing PM 2.5 standard that 50,000 lives would still be prematurely lost. There is no real debate: we need stronger clean air protections. This administration's failure to act to protect Americans would have been unacceptable even without a global respiratory pandemic. Given COVID-19's disproportionate impact on already pollution-burdened and struggling communities, now their actions are just cruel and outrageous.

The American people deserve leaders who listen to doctors and scientists and take the bold and necessary steps to protect our health and well-being. Please support this amendment and allow the EPA to start over and do their job to protect public health and the environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Clean Water Action
Climate Hawks Vote
Climate Reality Project
Defend Our Future
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform
Environmental Law and Policy Center

Greater Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution (GASP)
League of Conservation Voters
Moms Clean Air Force
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center