



April 10 2024

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Simpson and Merkley, and Ranking Members Pingree and Murkowski:

The undersigned health, medical and nursing organizations urge you to increase funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to \$12 billion in the fiscal year 2025 (FY25) Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for the agency to meet critical clean air objectives. EPA programs save lives and safeguard health. From air quality monitoring to reducing toxic emissions, the agency plays a crucial role in improving health outcomes.

Since the enactment of the Clean Air Act over 50 years ago, EPA has led the successful charge to ensure cleaner air and less pollution, but that work is not finished: health is still at risk from air pollution and other environmental hazards. The American Lung Association's "State of the Air" 2023 report found that nearly 36% of Americans live in areas with unhealthy levels of air pollution. While we understand that the FY25 budget will face spending caps, our organizations strongly support robust funding for EPA's budget to ensure the agency can continue its track record of success in delivering clean air.

Within the agency, there are a number of air-focused programs critical for public health that must receive adequate investment. The programs included in this letter are not an exhaustive list but represent key priorities of the undersigned health groups.

Clean Air Program

The work conducted under the Clean Air Program protects people from the impacts of air pollution, improves health and saves lives. This program provides states, Tribes and localities with resources and support to meet federal air quality standards and protect the health of their residents from dangerous air pollution. Crucial activities like oversight, testing vehicles to ensure they meet required emissions levels and mitigating any further worsening of air quality due to emissions are also funded by this program. **Please provide at least \$915.5 million for EPA's Clean Air Program, with \$694.6 million in Environmental Programs & Management and \$220.9 million in Science & Technology.**

Categorical Grants for State, Local and Tribal Air Monitoring

State, local and Tribal air agencies receive grants from EPA to help maintain their air monitoring networks. When this funding started, the intention was to fund a majority of participating air agency budgets. With time, however, this funding has failed to cover the costs of adequately maintaining and improving air monitors. This funding is crucial to informing the public on air quality risks to their health and in identifying areas that are most in need of pollution cleanup. The National Association of Clean Air Agencies and the National Tribal Air Association have stated that in order to adequately operate the nation's air quality monitoring networks, increases in federal funds are needed.¹ **Please provide \$500 million for State and Local Air Quality Management and \$57.4 million for Tribal Air Quality Management.**

Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program

The Diesel Emissions Reduction (DERA) Grant program continues to be a cost-effective program that enjoys bipartisan support. According to EPA's 2022 report to Congress, the health benefits of diesel emissions reduction projects are cost-effective, with monetized health benefits estimated to exceed federal funding by a factor of 10 to 1. Still, though, there are millions of dirty diesel engines that are polluting communities – particularly low-income areas and communities of color – in need of cleanup. **Please provide \$150 million for DERA grants.**

Indoor Air Quality in Schools

The Indoor Environments Division of the Office of Air and Radiation provides critical resources for improving indoor air quality – including in schools. Exposure to indoor environmental pollution can decrease attendance, negatively impact test scores and worsen asthma symptoms or other health impacts. A 2020 GAO report found that 41% of school districts were in need of HVAC repairs in at least half of their schools. Educators and school personnel need education, training and resources to implement effective prevention measures. Additionally, the Office of Children's Health Protection plays a critical role in researching children's risks and exposures in school and childcare facilities. **Please provide \$100 million for the Office of Air and Radiation/Indoor Environments Division and \$10 million to EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection.**

¹ National Association of Clean Air Agencies FY 2025 Funding Recommendations October 2023
https://www.4cleanair.org/wp-content/uploads/NACAA_FY_2025_Grant-Recommendations.pdf

Environmental Justice

Far too many communities are still waiting on the promise of clean air. The American Lung Association's "State of the Air" 2023 report found that people of color are 3.7 times more likely than white people to live in areas with the unhealthiest air. Targeted funding dedicated to cleaning up the air in disadvantaged communities and to advance the protection of those overburdened by air pollution is necessary to provide clean air for all. **Please provide at least \$369.1 million for environmental justice funding.**

Wildfire Smoke Preparedness

Wildfires have become a consistent threat that is only growing more frequent and widespread. Wildfire smoke is an urgent and increasing threat to public health, and it is not confined to western areas. In 2023, wildfires in Canada and the Northeast set off unprecedented air quality alerts down the East Coast, increasing emergency department visits for asthma-related conditions. EPA plays a vital role in forecasting and communicating the impacts of wildfire smoke. **Please provide \$15 million for wildfire smoke preparedness.**

EPA's work is critical in protecting health from poor air quality both outdoors and indoors and addressing the sources of pollution. Appropriately funding the agency to complete this work is a responsibility we urge Congress to meet. Please support \$12 billion in funding to EPA in Fiscal Year 2025.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Children's Environmental Health Network
Climate Psychiatry Alliance
ecoAmerica/Climate for Health
Health Care Without Harm
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Environmental Health Association
National League for Nursing
National Medical Association
Oncology Advocates United for Climate and Health - International
Physicians for Social Responsibility