

Testimony for the Proposed Repeal of the Clean Power Plan Hearing on behalf of the American Lung Association

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Good morning. My name is Diana Van Vleet, and I am the Director of Media Advocacy for the American Lung Association's Healthy Air Campaign. The American Lung Association is the nation's oldest voluntary health organization. Our mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease.

The American Lung Association represents millions of Americans with life-changing lung diseases. Just to name a few, we speak up for the more than 6 million children with asthma and more than 12 million adults with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Safeguarding Americans from the health threats posed by climate change is a key priority for the Lung Association.

From blazing wildfires in the West and more destructive storms in the Southeast to sweeping heatwaves and the spread of diseases like Lyme Disease, recent years have served as a very real reminder of the dangers Americans face from a changing climate. For everyone, but especially people with chronic lung disease, climate change is a major public health threat. Communities across the country are already experiencing its impacts, including more dangerous ozone pollution resulting from hotter temperatures, and more particle pollution from wildfire smoke.

These climate impacts translate to harm to the health of families across our nation. The recent wildfires in Montana, fueled by drought and warmer temperatures, caused respiratory issues for Lung Association volunteer Melissa Reynolds-Hogland and her family. Over a million acres were scorched in Montana in 2017. These fires had a serious health toll – smoke from wildfires triggers asthma attacks, causes respiratory damage, and can even shorten life. Melissa, who has asthma, and her young children, are especially vulnerable to the health harms of particle pollution from wildfire smoke. To prevent an asthma attack, Melissa and her family stayed inside for over 6 weeks while the air quality outside was dangerous. This year, the wildfire season extended into the school year, which meant students were exposed to unhealthy air quality while at school. The United States must reduce emissions that worsen climate change – not go back to the days of unlimited carbon pollution from power plants.

By reducing carbon pollution from power plants, the Clean Power Plan would be a major step forward to protect public health from the worst impacts of climate change.

The health benefits of the Clean Power Plan are tremendous. Cleaning up carbon pollution from power plants would not only fight climate change, but reduce other dangerous pollutants that are emitted alongside carbon. For example, reducing sulfur dioxide emissions and particulate matter will save lives. Repealing the Clean Power Plan would result in 45 percent more toxic sulfur dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants. Dramatically increasing sulfur dioxide is a huge step backward.

According to the EPA 2017 analysis, the Clean Power Plan would prevent 4,500 early deaths every year once it was fully implemented in 2030. That means this proposed repeal would result in up to 4,500 deaths every year needlessly.

We strongly object to EPA using alternative analyses in the Regulatory Impact Analysis of the lethal impacts of particulate matter. Arbitrarily cutting off the benefits of reducing particulate matter (PM) at the level of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) or the Lowest Measured Level fails to recognize the true health toll of pollution from power plants. The American Lung Association agrees with the World Health Organization and the strong scientific consensus that there is no discernable safe threshold for PM exposure. Let me repeat this: There is no discernable safe threshold for PM exposure.

The Clean Power Plan will cut pollution and save lives. Please do not repeal this lifesaving rule.

Thank you.