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Testimony of Paul G. Billings, Vice President for National Policy and Advocacy of the American Lung Association, on EPA's Proposed Soot Standards

WASHINGTON (July 17, 2012) – The American Lung Association is pleased to support more protective health standards of 11 micrograms per cubic meter for particulate matter annually and 25 micrograms per cubic meter for 24 hours. In my brief testimony, I would like to make four points.

1. The public has a right to know when the air is dirty, when air pollution may harm their health.
2. The law is clear, standards must be set at levels requisite to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety.
3. EPA and state and local air agencies must be focused on meeting the health protective standards.
4. And most importantly, the reason why standards exist is because air pollution kills. Yes, thousands of people die prematurely because ambient air pollution in the United States is too high.

The public has a right to know about the quality of the air they breathe. The science is robust – 10,000 studies show that particulate matter, microscopic specks of soot, metals, acids, dirt, pollen, molds, and aerosols, that are tiny enough to inhale and lodge deep in the lungs cause serious damage including asthma attacks; heart attacks and strokes; damage lung tissue and airways; increase hospital visits and can even kill. Those at greatest risk are children, seniors, people with chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and those living in poverty.

After extensive peer-review, the science shows that particle pollution harms the public well below the levels currently deemed to be safe. In 2009 the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that EPA failed to adequately protect public health from particulate matter in its 2006 standards – maintaining the status quo standards of 15 and 35 is not acceptable.

It is critical that EPA expand the roadside monitoring program. The science clearly shows that traffic-generated air pollution, increases risks to public health. We commend EPA's proposal to begin a program of roadside monitoring of PM_{2.5} pollution, but urge EPA to expand the network to protect the health of millions of Americans who live in high traffic areas. Without adequate monitoring, communities will not know the real extent of the burden this source places on public

health. The roadside monitors will help communities know whether the steps they are taking to clean up particulate matter are actually working.

Second, the Clean Air Act requires strong, protective standards. In 2001 the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld that the national ambient air quality standards must be based solely on the protection of public health and not on consideration of costs. This makes sense, standards tell us when the air is dirty and costs are fully considered in developing the cleanup strategies and timelines to meet the standards.

Third, EPA and the states must be developing cleanup plans to meet protective standards. Over the past 15 years a number of major national and regional cleanup programs have been adopted to address pollution from cars, diesel engines, ocean going vessels as well as power plants. These programs improve the air quality and save lives. However, many pollution cleanup programs remain at risk in the courts – we may learn within the hour on the Cross State Air Pollution Rule, or in Congress, especially the House of Representatives with its insatiable appetite to weaken clean air health protections. There are specific measures pending to block, weaken or delay numerous measures including the cruise industry’s effort to water down the cleanup of ocean-going vessels. Standards will make sure that everyone is protected and provide the backstop protection families need from the foul balls in Washington.

Finally and most important, air pollution kills. Last year, we released a report with our colleagues at Earthjustice and the Clean Air Task Force that used computer modeling to estimate the benefits of much cleaner, healthier air. That report, called *Sick of Soot*, found that if the nation cleaned up particle pollution enough to meet an annual standard of 11 micrograms per cubic meter and a 24-hour standard of 25 micrograms per cubic meter, we could prevent the premature deaths of 35,700 people each year. The analysis showed more than 1.4 million asthma attacks could be avoided. For Philadelphia, more than 1,500 deaths could be avoided each year.

In summary, The American Lung Association believes that the current standards allow far too much particulate matter into the air. To help protect all Americans, the Lung Association urges EPA to adopt much stronger, more protective fine particle standards and recommends an annual standard of 11 micrograms per cubic meter and a 24-hour standard of 25 micrograms per cubic meter.

Set standards that will truly protect public health. Thank you.

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About the American Lung Association

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