



November 15, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Alexander:

The undersigned health and medical organizations in Tennessee write to express our gratitude for your longtime leadership in supporting the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS). Most recently, we deeply appreciate your August 24, 2018 letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) urging the agency not to undermine the progress that has been made in protecting public health from the dangers of mercury poisoning.

Our organizations are dedicated to the protection of public health in Tennessee and support policies that safeguard health and improve health outcomes. The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards have saved lives by reducing dangerous pollution and protected developing brains from permanent damage by dramatically reducing mercury emissions from power plants.

Mercury causes permanent damage to the brains of babies and unborn children, leading to developmental delays, learning disabilities and birth defects. Power plants also emit more than 80 other hazardous air pollutants identified by the Clean Air Act, including arsenic, chromium, lead and acid gases. These pollutants cause cancer; damage the eyes, skin and breathing passages; harm the kidneys, lungs and nervous system; cause cardiovascular diseases; and kill. When the U.S. EPA adopted MATS, it estimated the rule would prevent up to 11,000 premature deaths each year and prevent 4,700 heart attacks, 130,000 asthma attacks and 5,700 hospital visits annually – and reduce mercury emissions from power plants by 90%

EPA's Mercury and Air Toxics Standards are a success story. The standards have reduced mercury emissions from power plants and cleaned up dangerous particle pollution at the same time. This is important in Tennessee where TVA has coal plants located in Bull Run, Gallatin, Cumberland and Kingston that have already installed the required controls.

Our organizations thank you for your continued leadership in protecting Tennesseans – particularly babies and children – from these dangerous pollutants. We call on you to continue to oppose any attempt by EPA to reconsider, undermine or weaken the lifesaving Mercury and Air Toxics Standards. Any proposed action that would weaken these protections, whether directly, by undermining the basis for the standards, or by undercounting or ignoring the lifesaving benefits of the rule, is a threat to the health of the communities our organizations serve.

Tennesseans have nothing to gain from the rollback of these lifesaving, highly effective standards, and many people – including pregnant women and their unborn children – have everything to lose.

Sincerely,

American Lung Association in Tennessee

American Academy of Pediatrics- Tennessee Chapter (TNAAP)

Mental Health America of the MidSouth

Physicians for Social Responsibility- Tennessee Chapter

Rural Health Association of Tennessee

Tennessee Academy of Family Physicians

Tennessee Association of Adult Day Services

Tennessee Charitable Care Network (TCCN)

Tennessee Nurses Association

Tennessee Primary Care Association

Tennessee Public Health Association

Tennessee Society for Respiratory Care