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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Hearing on the Particulate Matter National Ambient Air Quality
Standards
July 19, 2012

Sacramento, California
Docket Number EPA-HQ-OAR-2007-0492

Testimony of Susan S. Griffin,
Member of the National Board of Directors
of the American Lung Association

Good morning. Welcome to Sacramento. My name is Susan Griffin. I am a member of the National Board of Directors of the American Lung Association and also on the Board of the American Lung Association in California. I have been a volunteer with the Lung Association since 1989 and I live in Woodland in Yolo County. I am a 3rd generation San Franciscan and relocated from the Bay Area in 2003. Thank you for this opportunity to share both my personal perspective and the position of the American Lung Association with you on the need for new, stronger, health-based particulate matter national air quality standards.

First, let me share with you that I am a grandmother of an eleven year old boy with asthma who has suffered with this illness for five years. Because of his asthma, my grandson had to get three injections a week and take asthma and allergy medications that had serious side effects. These medications negatively affected his ability to learn in school. Finally, he had to move out of this area to the coast, and is now doing much better. Children like my grandson desperately need strong federal action to clean the air.

The national ambient air quality standards provide the backbone for nearly everything we do in this country to protect all Americans, including children and vulnerable populations, from air pollution. The standards define how much particle pollution can be in the air we breathe and still have it safe for us—all of us—to breathe. Not just safe for healthy adults, but safe for newborn babies, for teens with asthma (like my grandson), for retirees with heart disease, for mothers

with diabetes, for my daughter and her children, and seniors like my dad who is 91.

More than 40 years ago, Congress passed an important public health law, the Clean Air Act. The Act states that the standards should be set at a level that will protect public health “with an adequate margin of safety.” The sole basis is the impact on human health, a decision upheld unanimously by the Supreme Court in 2001. Now, the only issue to decide is how much particle pollution it takes to make people sick from breathing it.

The American Lung Association believes the current standards allow far too much particulate matter into the air. The Lung Association urges EPA to adopt much stronger, more protective fine particle standards. We recommend an annual standard of 11 micrograms per cubic meter and a 24-hour standard of 25 micrograms per cubic meter.

Since 1997 when EPA adopted the current annual standard, more than 10,000 peer-reviewed scientific studies have been published. The evidence is clear that particulate matter kills. Particulate matter causes premature death and threatens respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

These studies inform us that millions of people face higher risk from particulate matter. Those at risk groups include:

- Infants, children and teenagers, who are still developing 80% of their lungs;
- Older adults whose respiratory systems have worked hard for decades;
- People with lung disease, like asthma or COPD;
- People with cardiovascular disease or diabetes;
- People who have low incomes; and
- Even healthy adults who exercise or work outdoors.

The evidence for these conclusions comes from large studies of different populations across the nation and internationally. Recent research has also expanded our understanding of the wide range of harm that particles cause, and has found these harms at lower exposure levels than previously reported. The new evidence reinforces already existing strong studies and supports the conclusion that particulate matter harms human health at exposure levels far below the current standards. This conclusion demands prompt action to protect human health.

Last year, we released a report with our colleagues at Earthjustice and the Clean Air Task Force that estimated the benefits of much cleaner, healthier air. That report, called *Sick of Soot*, found that if the nation cleaned up particles enough to meet the standards recommended by the American Lung Association, 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.

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As backed up by our research, our recommended levels would provide the greatest protection for health by preventing the most premature deaths and illnesses. These levels fall below the EPA recommendation but provide the best public health protection. The evidence for a much tighter standard is grounded in substantial, robust, carefully reviewed and overwhelming science.

In simplest terms, the Clean Air Act requires EPA to tell the truth to the public about the air that we breathe. No one should accept being misled about pollution levels that are dangerous enough to shorten their lives or send a member of their family to the emergency room.

Please help my grandson and other children who are suffering from asthma. I would like him to be able to visit me without suffering and having an asthma attack. The American Lung Association urges EPA to share the truth about this pollutant with the American public and set the limit on particulate matter at the level that protects their health with a margin of safety. Thank you.