



May 17, 2023

Dear Senator/Representative:

The undersigned health groups remain deeply concerned by reporting about the so-called “permitting reform” proposals under negotiation to be included in a bill to address the debt ceiling. While there are separate legislative efforts underway to improve the permitting process and its outcomes for public health through regular order, the reported proposals under consideration as part of the debt limit negotiations could limit individual and community public participation rights and lead to increases in pollution in overburdened communities. The use of combustion-based energy sources is worsening air quality and accelerating climate change.

The undersigned health groups oppose legislation or provisions that would gut key public health laws like the Clean Air Act or put public health at greater risk of harm from air pollution. We also oppose efforts to curtail opportunities for public engagement. Individuals and communities have a right to comment, and to a path to legal recourse if needed, for projects that would affect their health. It is also vitally important that sound environmental analysis of the potential impacts of projects to health and safety of nearby communities be available to inform the public.

Our groups also oppose provisions that would drive the increased buildout of fossil fuel infrastructure. Burning fossil fuels results in particle pollution, nitrogen oxide and ozone pollution that can trigger asthma attacks, worsen respiratory diseases, cause heart attacks and strokes and even cause premature death. Oil and natural gas production releases volatile organic compounds, which can include cancer-causing pollutants like benzene and formaldehyde. Fossil fuel extraction and use are also driving climate change, which brings additional health impacts by way of extreme heat, intense storms and flooding, wildfires, increases in ozone and particle pollution, increases of vector-borne diseases and extensions of allergy seasons.

The Clean Air Act has been driving pollution cleanup for over 50 years. While climate change is threatening to undo progress, the air we are breathing today is cleaner thanks to this landmark law. But these improvements have not been equitably delivered. People of color and low-income communities continue to bear a disproportionate pollution burden. Now is not the time to weaken the Clean Air Act and its protections, to curtail the public’s ability to participate in decisions involving the air and public

health in their communities, or to make it easier for new fossil fuel infrastructure to add pollution to the air we breathe.

Everyone deserves access to clean, healthy air. That right should not be used as a bargaining chip. We will continue to oppose any legislative efforts that will worsen air quality and threaten the health and safety of communities.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Children's Environmental Health Network
Climate Psychiatry Alliance
Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health
Medical Students for a Sustainable Future
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Hispanic Medical Association
National League for Nursing
Physicians for Social Responsibility

