

Comments from Harold Wimmer
President and CEO, American Lung Association
Repeal of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Fossil Fuel-Fired Electric Generating Units
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As prepared for delivery

Good morning. My name is Harold Wimmer, and I am proud to serve as the President and CEO of the American Lung Association. The American Lung Association is the nation's oldest voluntary health organization, and we work toward a world free of lung disease. We base everything that we do at the American Lung Association on science. In the case of climate change, the science cannot be clearer. Greenhouse gas emissions are driving climate change, which is harming people's lungs across the country. I urge EPA to withdraw this proposed repeal.

Achieving clean air for all is a central component of the Lung Association's mission. For decades, we've been helping people understand the connection between clean air and their lung health. Since the Clean Air Act was passed, EPA has set many strong air quality standards and cleaned up pollution from the power sector and other sources. With every release of our hallmark "State of the Air" report, we have been able to paint a picture of the success of this landmark public health law. Thanks to EPA's work to clean up air pollution under the Clean Air Act, our reports have long shown that the air is safer to breathe. But in recent years, our "State of the Air" report has shown a troubling change. After decades of downward trends in air pollution, levels are ticking back upward, thanks to warmer temperatures and wildfire smoke. Climate change is threatening to undo the nation's progress in cleaning up air pollution. We at the Lung Association feel that it is our responsibility as the trusted champion for lung health to advocate for policies that prevent the worst health impacts of climate change.

That's why our organization advocated so forcefully for the carbon pollution standards for power plants – because these standards were a victory for lung health. I was proud to speak at Howard University when the final standards were announced last year. I highlighted the fact that they'll result in fewer asthma attacks and fewer premature deaths. And we stood alongside other health and medical organizations, because the public health, nursing and medical communities understand that to protect patients and communities, EPA must address power plant pollution.

You will likely hear from many health professionals and representatives of health organizations today. When devastating floods, wildfires and extreme heat rip through communities, the health community answers the call. It is the pulmonologist that prescribes an inhaler to a child whose asthma is exacerbated by emissions from a nearby power plant. It's the nurse who explains to a lung cancer survivor how to stay safe during a wildfire smoke event.

Just last month, 28 health organizations issued a “Declaration on Climate Change and Health”. In it, we call it “our duty to urge leaders at every level to take swift action to address the health impacts of climate change and reduce the pollution driving it.” Which is why, today, I am asking EPA to withdraw its repeal of the greenhouse gas emissions standards for power plants. On behalf of the nation’s lungs, I urge you to remember the responsibility that is at the center of the Agency’s mission – to protect public health and the environment. Thank you for your time.