

Testimony of Harold P. Wimmer

National President and CEO, American Lung Association

House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

**Re: Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) appropriations for key public health programs within the
Environmental Protection Agency**

March 10, 2022

Summary of FY 2023 Appropriations Recommendations:

Clean Air Program overall – \$573.2 million
Climate Protection Program – \$115.9 million
Federal Support for Air Quality Management – \$171 million
Federal Vehicle Fuels Standards and Certifications Programs – \$110.2 million
Categorical Grants: State and Local Air Quality Management – \$500 million
Categorical Grants: Tribal Air Quality Management – \$33 million
Compliance Monitoring – \$132.4 million
Enforcement – \$272.7 million
Environmental Justice Enforcement - \$132.3
Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program – \$150 million
EPA Radon Program - \$3.3 million
Categorical Grant: Radon – \$16 million
New Wildfire Smoke Protection Program: \$15 million

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to highlight the funding priorities of the American Lung Association within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for fiscal year 2023 (FY23). The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. Between the toll of lung cancer, the prevalence of asthma, the harms of unhealthy air and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in the nation's lung health are critical. We recognize that this testimony is being provided prior to the finalization of FY22 appropriations and the President's FY23 budget release; however, we urge the Committee to increase funding for EPA.

EPA programs save lives and improve lung health. The Agency is responsible for setting and enforcing national air pollution standards; supporting state, local and Tribal air quality monitoring and pollution reduction efforts; educating the public about air toxics and air pollution; issuing grants to retrofit dirty diesel buses and more. Air pollution poses a threat to the health of all Americans, but there is someone in every family at heightened risk of health harms from breathing polluted air. There are nearly 37 million Americans living with a chronic lung

disease like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Children, seniors, pregnant people and those who work and play outside are also more likely to suffer health harms. Additionally, people of color and those with low incomes face a greater risk of exposure to air pollution due to communities being overlooked for investment and enforcement in addition to longstanding racist practices like redlining.

The President's FY22 budget included a more than 20% increase for EPA. We strongly support a robust overall increase in EPA funding and ask the Committee to ensure increased funding for programs that promote clean air and enforce pollution cleanup. Funds under EPA's Clean Air Program are used in part to assist states, Tribes and local air pollution control agencies with implementing comprehensive air quality management programs to meet the national air quality standards. This program also includes testing and oversight to ensure vehicles are emitting lawful amounts of pollution into the air as well as efforts to reduce carbon pollution, methane, and other climate pollutants to protect public health from the impacts of climate change. Please provide \$434.1 million for Environmental Programs and Management and \$139.1 million for Science and Technology. Within this program area, the Lung Association specifically requests \$115.9 million for the Climate Protection Program; \$171 million for Federal Support for Air Quality Management; and \$110.2 million for Federal Vehicle Fuels Standards and Certifications Programs.

Accurately monitoring the air we breathe is the first step to addressing air pollution. Unfortunately, state, local and Tribal air agencies – who run most of the nation's air quality monitoring system – have been perennially underfunded, and many areas are operating with out-of-date monitors. The Government Accountability Office release a report in 2020 showing that there has been a 20% decrease in funds, adjusted for inflation, since 2004.¹ Grant dollars provided under Section 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act help fund air quality monitoring work, which informs the public of risks to their health and identifies areas in need of cleanup. We appreciated additional funds that were provided in the American Rescue Plan, but we know that more, regular and consistent funding is needed so that state, local and Tribal air agencies can add, upgrade and maintain air monitors and improve engagement with the public to protect health, as part of a multi-year, sustained investment in these critical programs. The National Association of Clean Air Agencies, an organization that represents many of the Section 103 and 105 recipients, surveyed its members to determine what they will need to successfully implement their programs under current and anticipated federal requirements. The results showed that air agencies need large increases if they are to adequately protect health by monitoring air pollution

¹ Government Accountability Office. (2020). Air Pollution: Opportunities to Better Sustain and Modernize the National Air Quality Monitoring System (GAO-21-38)

levels.² Please provide \$500 million for State and Local Air Quality Management Categorical Grants and \$33 million for Tribal Air Quality Management Categorical Grants.

Compliance with EPA's air quality rules must be enforced if these safeguards are to truly achieve their intended health benefits. Investment in EPA's enforcement work is critical to ensure the public is protected from dangerous air pollution as the law requires. EPA must have the ability and funding needed to reduce non-compliance, as well as enforce penalties for violations. EPA must also be prepared to respond to civil enforcement actions authorized by the Clean Air Act. Additionally, air pollution does not impact everyone equally. The Administration has tasked EPA with prioritizing righting environmental injustices. To do so effectively, EPA needs dedicated funding for environmental justice. Please provide \$132.4 million for compliance monitoring, \$272.7 million for enforcement and \$132.3 dedicated for enforcing environmental justice commitments.

One of the programs within EPA that continues to receive bipartisan support is the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Program. Millions of old, dirty diesel engines are in use today that pollute communities, threaten workers and cause lung cancer. According to a 2019 EPA report, the Committee's continued investments in this program have yielded up to \$30 in health benefits for every \$1 spent.³ Immense opportunities remain to reduce diesel emissions through the DERA program, and we urge the Committee to appropriate \$150 million in FY23. Additionally, we urge the Committee to continue supporting the rapid transition to electric school buses through the Clean School Bus Program provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Millions of children will ride a bus to school every day, exposing them to pollution from these dirty diesel engines. Investing in the transition to electric school buses will provide a safer, healthier environment for children, who are among those most at risk of health harm from breathing in pollution.

Radon is an odorless, colorless gas that seeps through the ground as it shifts and is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. EPA's radon program and its State Indoor Radon Grants are the only nationwide tools that help prevent exposure to radon. States and Tribes depend on these programs to educate the public and fight this deadly carcinogen. We recommend \$3.3 million for EPA's Radon Program (within that, \$3.1 million be appropriated for Environmental Program and Management and \$158,000 for Science and Technology) and \$16

²National Association of Clean Air Agencies FY 2023 Funding One Pager February 2022
<https://www.4cleanair.org/wp-content/uploads/NACAA-FY-2023-Funding-One-Pager-February-2022-2.pdf>

³Environmental Protection Agency (2019) DERA Fourth Report to Congress (EPA-420-R-19-005)
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-07/documents/420r19005.pdf>

million for the State Indoor Radon Grants. Additionally, we recommend that the Agency move away from the use of the EPA zone map to indicate areas of concern. Radon is a dangerous substance that should be tested for and abated regularly. The EPA radon zone map is outdated and could falsely lead families to thinking their zone 1 community is safe, when in reality, every home has the potential to have unsafe levels of radon.

We are also renewing our request for a new program to be housed with EPA. Wildfires are no longer a rare occurrence, making wildfire smoke an urgent and increasing threat to health. Currently there are knowledge gaps, particularly on how wildfires affect the health of those living in downwind states, and there is a lack of a focused federal response to health impacts. EPA would be well equipped to provide that federal response with additional resources. The Lung Association requests a total of \$15 million in funding to address these impacts, including \$5 million to establish Wildfire Smoke Health Centers in Collaboration with US Forest Service Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory; \$7 million for targeted research on wildfire smoke exposure and policy; and \$3 million for EPA to coordinate interagency science, management and communication strategies for addressing wildfires.

Lastly, the American Lung Association also asks for your leadership in opposing all policy riders that would weaken key lung health protections, including those in the Clean Air Act. Policy riders have no place in appropriations bills, and the Lung Association strongly opposes attempts to include them, especially riders that would make it harder to protect Americans from air pollution.

Investments in EPA programs are critical to protecting public health. On behalf of the Lung Association, I thank you for your consideration of these requests.