

Comments of Liz Scott – As Prepared for Delivery
National Director, Advocacy, Healthy Air
American Lung Association
On

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Standards of Performance for New, Reconstructed, and Modified Sources and Emissions Guidelines for Existing Sources: Oil and Natural Gas Sector Climate Review Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2021-0317 FRL-8510-02-OAR
December 1, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is Liz Scott – spell name – and I am the National Director of Advocacy for Healthy Air at the American Lung Association. Thank you for giving me and so many others the chance to speak at this week's public hearing. I support EPA's proposal and encourage the Agency to finalize even stronger limits on pollution from new and existing oil and gas sources.

The American Lung Association often says "when you can't breathe, nothing else matters." As the country continues to battle an ongoing pandemic caused by a respiratory disease, those words ring truer than ever. Millions of Americans are living with a preexisting lung condition – whether it's asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (or COPD), or those facing a long road ahead with lingering COVID-19 impacts. For those individuals, simply breathing can be a hard task and it is made worse by the impacts of climate change, which is fueled in part by oil and gas operations.

The extraction, transport and distribution of methane gas releases emissions into the atmosphere at every step in the process. Methane is a powerful accelerator of climate change – it is 86 times more potent than carbon. The health impacts from climate change are not far-off occurrences that we can ignore until they reach us personally. They are happening now and we must mitigate the impacts by dramatically reducing the amount of methane we're putting into the atmosphere and hopefully staving off worse impacts in the future.

This year we saw record-breaking heat, droughts, wildfires and extreme weather. These extreme weather patterns are being fueled by climate change which is being fueled by methane emissions. Every time a wildfire or a hurricane strikes, it threatens the health and well-being of communities long after the last flames are put out or the floods subside.

To paint a grim picture even further, it's not just methane emissions that are released in oil and gas operations. Volatile organic compounds, like benzene, are emitted alongside methane and can worsen asthma symptoms, and increase the risk of cancer, developmental and neurological disorders. VOCs can also react to form harmful ozone pollution. Communities across the country are already dealing with these health impacts due to their proximity to oil and gas wells, I'm sure you've heard a few of their stories over the course of this hearing. A stronger methane rule and accountability placed on oil and gas operators can also help reduce the levels of these dangerous compounds, so EPA has an opportunity here to not only address climate change but to provide immediate health benefits as well.

Everyone is impacted by pollution and climate change but there are some communities who are disproportionately affected. One in three people in the United States live in a county with oil and gas production, putting them at risk from the co-pollutants released along with methane. And climate change is making air pollution worse, making it even harder for some vulnerable communities to breathe. The American Lung Association's State of the Air Report found that 40% of Americans live in

areas with unhealthy levels of air pollution – and people of color are three times more likely than whites to live in the most polluted of those areas. We appreciate this Administration’s commitment to prioritizing environmental justice and we urge you to remember that commitment when it comes to finalizing standards for oil and gas operations.

The American Lung Association supports EPA’s proposal to limit pollution from new and existing oil and gas sources and urges the Agency to finalize even stronger limits to reduce methane emissions from new and existing oil and gas sources by 65% of the 2012 levels by 2025 without loopholes. We have the technology to make it happen and the science to say it has to happen. We look forward to living in a world where everyone can breathe easier.

Thank you for your time.