

April 17, 2024

Governor Shapiro, Lieutenant Governor Davis, Speaker McClinton and Majority Leader Bradford,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, who represent hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, we support HB 652 and look to you for your leadership in helping it gain greater traction among Democratic legislators and ensuring its successful advancement through the legislature.

HB 652 would uplift Environmental Justice (EJ) communities and is modeled on successful policies adopted in New Jersey, Minnesota and most recently Massachusetts. It requires certain known polluting facilities seeking permits to build or expand in EJ communities to prepare a cumulative environmental assessment that includes potential negative impacts their operations may have on the broader area they're operating in and empowers the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to deny a permit application or require added stipulations for approval if it finds those impacts would further harm the health and environment of the community.

HB 652 is also the perfect complement to the recent revisions DEP made to their Environmental Justice Public Participation Policy which improved the previous iteration of the PennEnviroScreen, enhanced opportunities for community participation in the permitting process, and prioritized inspection and monitoring for certain sites within EJ communities. Yet at the DEP's own admission the policy is not without its limitations because according to Fernando Treviño, Special Deputy Secretary for Environmental Justice, "DEP is limited in its ability to enact regulations because the department isn't a legislative body. In order to make it enforceable with rules, it's up to the legislature to pass bills that will make some of this stuff mandatory." HB 652 is the best vehicle to create the needed additional statutory authority DEP is referencing and advocating for.

Roughly 2.3 million people live in 1,965 identified EJ areas according to the update PennEnviro Screen tool which uses 32 determination indicators, including exposure to pollution and toxic emissions, traffic volume, and proximity to oil and gas wells. It also considers race, age, income, graduation rates, unemployment, and health conditions like asthma and cancer. Historically, these areas have been forced to bear a disproportionate share of adverse environmental impacts. These conditions result in poor health as well as the creation of undesirable living conditions that prevent communities from growing and truly flourishing.

HB 652 has already been co-sponsored by half the House Democratic delegation. We truly appreciate you also being among its supporters but more is needed. Controlling both the Governor's Mansion and Pennsylvania House of Representatives for the first time in over a decade represents an opportunity to finally move proactively toward creating meaningful avenues that assure the fair treatment of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Please further partner with us to help pass HB 652.

Sincerely,

Clean Water Action- Steve Hvozdoch, Pennsylvania Campaigns Director

412 Justice- Angel Gober, Executive Director or Nickole Nesby, Environmental Justice Organizer

Allegheny Clean Air Now- Angelo Taranto, Secretary

Allegheny Cleanways- Caily Grube, Executive Director

Beyond Training- Troy McCune, Co owner

Black Appalachian Coalition- Kidest Gebre, Communications/Campaigns Manager

Black Empowerment Collective- Alyssa Lyon, Director

Black Farmers Co-op- Dr. Carol Simmons, Coordinator

Breathe Project- Matthew Mehalik, Executive Director

Centennial Parkside, CDC- Sandra Calhoun, Director of Sanitation & Environmental Programs

Center for Coalfield Justice- Nina Victoria, Community Advocate

Chester Residents Concern for Quality Living (CRCQL)- Zulene Mayfield, Chairperson

Clean Air Council- Matt Walker, Advocacy Director

Community Empowerment Association, INC. - Marlene Davis, Deputy Director

Conservation Voters of PA- Katie Blume, Political & Legislative Director

Earthworks- Melissa Ostroff, Pennsylvania Policy and Field Advocate

Empowered CDC- Xeyah Martin, Executive Director

Feeling Environments, LLC - Sandra Calhoun

Food and Water Watch- Megan McDonough, Pennsylvania State Director

Global Thinking Initiatives Inc- Elaine Wells, Founder

Green Building Alliance-Chris Cieslak, Vice President of Programs

Grounded Strategies- Rebecca Simon, Project Manager of Policy and Land Stewardship

Group Against Smog & Pollution- Patrick Campbell, Executive Director

Homewood AME Zion Church- Rev. Dr. Jonathon Countz, Pastor

Homewood Children's Village- JaLissa D. Coffee, Deputy CEO / Director of Youth Development

HouzeofWaxx- Ali Deen, CEO

IPPA Food Forestry Arts and Culture- The Onkwhehonwe Ba-kab kob utzil ux-wiil Nation

Kensington Corridor Trust, Jasmin Velez, Lead Community Organizer

Landforce- Ilyssa Manspeizer, Executive Director

Mantua Civic Association- De'Wayne Drummond, President

Moms Clean Air Force- Vanessa Lynch, Field Organizer

Mountain Watershed Association- Ashley Funk, Executive Director

National Resource Defense Council- Robert Routh, Pennsylvania State Lead Climate & Clean Energy

North Braddock Residents For Our Future- Edith Abeyta

Open Field- Justin Forzano, Founder and CEO

PennFuture- Adam Nagel, Director of Government Affairs

Philly Neighborhood Network- Gloria Gilman, Executive Committee Chair

Philadelphia Orchard Project- Kim Jordan, Co-Executive Director

Philly Thrive- Shawmar Pitts, Co-Managing Director

Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania- Tammy Murphy, Advocacy Director

Pittsburgh United- Alex Wallach Hanson, Executive Director

POWER Interfaith- Rabbi Julie Greenberg, Climate Justice and Jobs Director

Protect Elizabeth Township- Fred Bickerton, Board Chair

Protect PT- Tom Pike, Environmental Policy Advocate

Riverwise- Daniel Rossi Keen, Executive Director

Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter- Thomas Schuster, Chapter Director

Stalk Seasoned Sustained, LLC- Sandra Calhoun,

The Americas Environmental L.A.W. Protectors- The Onkwehonwe Ba-kab kob utzil ux-wiil Nation

Three Rivers Waterkeeper- Heather Hulton Van Tassel, Executive Director

Trash Academy- Shari Hersh, Founder and Creative Director

Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership- Julie Slavet, Executive Director

Upstream Pittsburgh- Aaron Birdy, Watershed Programs Coordinator

Valley Clean Air Now- Qiyam Ansari, Lead Organizer

Vote Solar- Elowyn Corby, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director

Women for a Healthy Environment- Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis, Executive Director