Testimony on the Oil and Gas New Source Performance Standards

My name is Peggy Ann Berry from Dayton, Ohio. I am a PhD prepared nurse researcher and certified occupational health nurse specialist. I am a member, activist, and/or a volunteer with the Ohio Sierra Club, the Ohio Environmental Council, Moms Clean Air Force and the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in opposition to the EPA’s proposed delay of its June 2016 new source performance standards for the oil and gas industry.

The Standards are crucial to protect public health. In the exploration and production of oil and gas, millions of metric tons of methane are released with other dangerous gases and chemicals, like benzene. From a health perspective, implementation, not postponement, of these rules are a key step towards primary prevention of many health issues suffered by children and adults exposed to ozone smog resulting from oil and gas pollution. Not only are kids with asthma forced indoors to avoid aggravating their condition but moms with unborn babies and the elderly incur health effects. I am speaking out because the lives of my grandchildren and their children depend on the EPA doing its job to protect human health and the environment.

Responsible corporate citizens commit to the safety of their workers and communities, increasing, not decreasing, profitability. However, the oil and gas industries have not been held accountable to any previous laws on Clean Water or Air. Without enforcement of the Standards’ rules and regulations, community chemical exposures will regularly occur. The Standards create a best practice in containing methane emissions from new oil and gas exploration and production with the containment of methane and other volatile organic compounds.

In Ohio, community concerns have been largely ignored by our state legislature on hydraulic fracturing even when accidental contamination occurs near community water sources. There are ongoing air quality concerns as well as noise pollution from compressor stations. Likewise, when methane and other gases are vented off and not captured for use, it not only affects the air we breathe but contributes to global warming.

Methane is a highly potent greenhouse gas – 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide, which means it is a powerful contributor to climate change. Methane gas releases are one of the greatest threat our planet has ever faced. The oil and gas industry specifically contribute at least 9.8 million metric tons of methane pollution a year, which accounts for about a quarter of the total man-made global warming we are experiencing today. Methane is the second most prevalent greenhouse gas emitted in the United States from human activities, and nearly 30 percent of those emissions come from oil production, transmission and distribution of natural gas. Methane emissions are projected to significantly increase over the next decade without actions to lower them.

Our future generations will be impacted by implementation of these standards. The Trump administration needs to stop putting polluter profits ahead of the health of our families and future generations. Every day in America, approximately 78,000 people miss school or work due to asthma; 35000 people have an asthma attack; 4600 people visit the emergency room due to asthma; 1200 people are admitted to the hospital due to asthma, and; ten people die each day from asthma1.

If the EPA postpones or dilutes these standards, the overwhelming health impact can’t be measured. As an environmental activist, I will continue to hold the EPA accountable to its primary purpose of protecting human health and the environment by writing and enforcing regulations, whether by laws passed by Congress or our past president. We cannot afford to go back. America needs the new source performance standards now; they do not need these standards postponed or diluted to suit the oil and gas industry. I strongly urge the EPA not to delay, revise, or rescind these lifesaving and common sense rules.

1. http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/research/divisions/a/asthma/default/