**EPA Methane Rule Talking Points:**

**Overview:**

The EPA methane rule is a commonsense way to protect our environment and our communities by reducing dangerous pollution. The regulations are hardly onerous - they come at minimal cost to industry - and rolling back these protections would have detrimental impacts for health.

**Health Effects**

* The EPA’s methane regulation is crucial to protecting public health. Oil and gas companies release millions of metric tons of methane into the air every year. When methane is released, a lot of other dangerous gases and chemicals are released as well, like benzene and volatile organic compounds.
* These gases can react to produce ozone smog, which has been proven to cause long-term health problems like asthma and even cancer. Ozone inhalation is like getting a sunburn on your lungs.
* Children miss 500,000 days of school nationally each year due to ozone smog resulting from oil and gas pollution.
* Nationally, there are more than 750,000 summertime asthma attacks in children under the age of 18 due to ozone smog resulting from oil and gas pollution.
* Children are at the greatest health risk from air pollution because they are more likely to be active outdoors and their lungs are still developing. Asthma strikes nearly one out of every 10 school children in the US and is the number one health issue that causes kids to miss school.

**Climate**

* Methane poses a grave a danger to our planet. It has 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide, making it a major driver of climate disruption.
* Right now, oil and gas industrial plants emit at least 9.8 million metric tons of methane pollution a year. That has the same climate impact as burning almost 225 coal-fired power plants for a year, or driving 2/3 of all of the cars in the U.S. for a year (over 175 million cars).
* The EPA’s rule would reduce methane emissions by 460,000 metric tons by 2025. That’s the equivalent of reducing 40 million metric tons of carbon dioxide!

**Example LTE in opposition to EPA methane rule delay:**

Subject: Delay of methane rules is an assault on our kids

To OUTLET:

To the editor,

The Trump administration’s decision to delay commonsense rules that limit methane pollution is irresponsible and stands to seriously harm our kids. The regulations were designed to curb methane emissions and waste, resulting from oil and gas companies venting methane into the open air.

As a practicing nurse/public health expert, I applaud the recent federal court of appeals’ ruling on the Trump’s administration effort to delay an EPA rule to limit methane pollution from oil and natural gas drilling, saying that the argument that the Obama administration had skipped over procedures for stakeholder comment didn’t stand up to scrutiny.

The children of San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas and across the nation are the most vulnerable to the negative health impacts of methane emissions. Without these commonsense rules, our kids will be exposed to methane emissions, asthma-causing smog, and carcinogenic chemicals such as benzene, while gas companies waste public resources and taxpayer dollars. Methane is also a potent greenhouse gas, and I have witnessed patients suffering from cardiorespiratory problems and heat stress exacerbated by climate change.

The Environmental Protection Agency admits that the delay of the commonsense rules will disproportionately harm children, but the administration still chose to decrease regulatory action. I applaud the ruling and encourage the community to hold elected and appointed officials accountable for maintaining these health-protecting regulations.

NAME,

OCCUPATION

CITY, STATE

**Example opinion editorial in opposition to EPA methane rule delay:**

Acknowledging that delaying the 2016 standards regulating methane emissions from new and modified oil and gas facilities could harm children’s health shows this proposal is in direct opposition to the core mission of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As a public health agency, the EPA must protect the health of the public and the environment by ensuring common-sense safeguards are enforced to reduce harm to human health.

EPA’s methane rule is crucial to fighting climate change and health risks by limiting emissions of methane – an especially potent greenhouse gas. Furthermore, preventing the leakage of methane leads to a decrease in emissions of toxic and carcinogenic air pollutants. Ensuring strong enforcement of regulations that keep the air that Americans breathe clean and free of harmful pollutants benefits public health in communities across the country.

With the EPA methane rule we would see immediate reductions in the emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) that are released with methane during oil and gas operations. VOCs are linked to numerous health problems such as cancer, from exposure to benzene, a known human carcinogen. VOCs are also precursors to the formation of ozone, with exposure causing respiratory and cardiac harm. Children are especially at risk of harm from dangerous air pollutants due to their rapid breathing rates, developing immune systems and lungs, and increased time spent outdoors.

As a practicing nurse caring for children, I see the impact that chronic respiratory illnesses, such as asthma, has on a child, their family, and the health care system. In the United States, ozone pollution from oil and gas production results each summer in children more than 750,000 asthma attacks, more than 2,000 asthma-related ER visits, and over 600 respiratory related hospital admissions. From these estimates, we can assume a two-year delay will not have a limited impact on the health of children leaving near or downwind oil and gas facilities.

When health is prioritized, EPA enforcement of clean air safeguards creates a win-win; the public is healthier and the economy is stronger. By 2020, under the Clean Air Act the U.S. will have realized an estimated $2 trillion in benefits at a cost of $65 billion, largely resulting from reductions in health care utilization and a healthier workforce. The EPA methane rule is similar. Reducing methane leaks is economically feasible for oil and gas companies in return for a large climate and public health benefit. For children with asthma living near oil and gas development sites this means fewer asthma attacks and fewer days missed from school, allowing for a better chance to be successful in school and life.

The methane rule is a step in the right direction in addressing climate change. As the body of evidence builds about the health impacts from climate change and the cause for concern becomes more urgent, strong action is needed. With the majority of oil and gas facilities operating in states without methane standards and the growth of the industry, there is a need for strong federal regulations to ensure protection of our most vulnerable populations from the increasing health threats from climate change.

In addition to health professionals and organizations, the public wants strong safeguards that protect clean air. At the EPA’s only public hearing of the proposed delay, 98% of individuals, health groups, businesses, and community representatives spoke out in opposition to a delay. Delaying the methane rule would go against what the public is calling on EPA to do—protect clean air and health.

Repealing or modifying regulations that enforce statutes that are shown to improve health and save lives will contribute to undue harm to the public and our most vulnerable populations. Health professionals need to continue to hold EPA officials and members of Congress accountable for decisions that aim to rollback health protective regulations and threaten health. Delay only means more exposure to dangerous pollutants, harm to public health, and weakening of clean air safeguards.