
Janet A. Phoenix, MD, MPH, Chair, DC Asthma Coalition
Parisa Norouzi, Executive Director, EMPOWER DC
Dr. Sacoby Wilson, University of Maryland Center for Community
Engagement, Environmental Justice and Health (CEEJH)
Tene Lewis, Lead Volunteer, Campaign to Reduce
Lead Exposure & Asthma

September 26, 2023

Anita Bonds, Chair, MWCOG Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
(MWAQC)

Takis Karantonis, Chair, MWCOG Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee
(CEEPC)

Committee Members, MWAQC

Committee Members, CEEPC

777 North Capitol St. N.E.

Suite 300

Washington, DC 20002

RE: Request to Provide Input on the MWAQC/MWCOG Environmental Justice Plan

Chairwoman Bonds, Chairman Karantonis, MWAQC members, CEEPC members:

We are writing to offer our assistance to MWAQC, CEEPC and MWCOG as you work to finalize and implement the regional Environmental Justice Plan that Chairwoman Bonds proposed and passed during MWAQC's May 24, 2023 meeting. This proposal was vigorously supported by the Committee and passed unanimously. We understand that this issue may be discussed at the September 27, 2023 MWAQC and CEEPC meetings. This letter is follow-up to the comments that we submitted for the May 20, 2023 TPB meeting.

We have begun to work with Tad Aburn on this and other issues and we share his concern that it has been nearly a quarter of a year and that no real progress has been made to follow-up on Chairwoman Bond's action during the May 24th MWAQC meeting to expeditiously develop and adopt a stand-alone environmental justice plan. We find this surprising given the Committees clear charge to develop and implement the plan expeditiously.

The Plan needs to not only encourage the need to build partnerships with environmental justice communities but also include real action to reduce excessive emissions in these areas from both stationary and transportation related sources.

The data, research and analysis that is now readily available clearly shows that excess emissions in and around environmental justice areas are creating very serious, inequitable public health risks to the people and the children that live in these communities. In a briefing to MWAQC, Dr. Russell Dickerson, a national expert on air pollution, characterized the measured air pollution levels in the Ivy City environmental justice area as “alarming”.

Transportation Related Air Pollution (TRAP) is a high priority to our coalition. We have attached a 2022 letter describing our concerns over TRAP and the critical need for government agencies and regional planning organizations like MWCOG to take action to address this issue.

We have followed Mr. Aburn’s efforts (before retiring, Mr. Aburn was the MDE Air Director for many years) to push MWAQC and the MWCOG Transportation Planning Board (TPB) to address the need to reduce pollution in the now well documented air pollution hotspots that are driven by TRAP and causing high risks in environmental justice communities of color. We support his efforts and share his concerns. Interestingly, Mr. Aburn’s efforts started in Late 2022, almost the same time we began to push the need to address TRAP.

In closing, should you want our input on what we believe is critical in your environmental justice plan, please contact us. Please contact Tad Aburn. He will be coordinating this effort.

Thank you again for allowing public input. The work you are doing is critical.

Sincerely,

Janet A. Phoenix

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Parisa Norouzi

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Dr. Sacoby Wilson

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Tene Lewis

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George S. Aburn Jr.

George S. (Tad) Aburn Jr., Volunteer

Cc: William Washburn, Climate Justice Chair, Washington DC Branch, NAACP
Kate Stewart, Chair, MWCOG BOD
Reuben Collins, Chair, TPB
Clark Mercer, Executive Director, MWCOG
Rick Conrad, MWCOG Title VI Officer
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