

As Prepared for Delivery
Comments of **Mariela Ruacho**
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On
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
California Waiver Hearing: Advanced Clean Trucks, Omnibus Low NOx, and HD Emission Warranty
Regulations

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Good morning – My name is Mariela Ruacho. I’m the Clean Air Advocacy Manager with the American Lung Association based in California. I am speaking in strong support of the Environmental Protection Agency granting California these cleaner truck waivers without delay to implement these critical public health policies.

As it has been for over five decades, the Clean Air Act recognizes the unique challenges facing the people of California when it comes to unhealthy air pollution.

The policies that California has adopted are critical to protecting residents from truck and other heavy-duty vehicle emissions that are harmful to human health. Cutting these emissions is vital to improving public health, reducing health disparities, and reducing climate pollutants from the trucking industry.

Again, we call on EPA to grant these waivers immediately so that California and other states can move forward with these life-saving rules.

Transportation pollution is the dominant source of both climate pollution and smog-forming NOx. The trucking sector is a major source of regional air pollution that threatens health, despite trucks making up a small percentage of the on-road vehicle population.

Over 4 in 10 Americans – 137 million people – now live in a community impacted by unhealthy air quality according to the American Lung Association’s *State of the Air 2022* report.

In California, there are 38 million people – 98 percent of the state – living in communities impacted by unhealthy air who depend on the state to use its Clean Air Act authority to protect their health.

The trucking pollution issue looms large in discussions of environmental justice.

The Lung Association’s *State of the Air* report further noted that a person of color in the United States is 61 percent more likely to live in a community with a failing air pollution grade, and over 3 times more likely to live in a community with the worst air quality.

I grew up in one of California’s top 10 percent most environmentally disadvantaged communities per CalEnviroScreen in South Los Angeles. It is a low-income, black and brown community. The street next to my house, Jefferson Blvd, is constantly used as a highway for cars and trucks, and the elementary school I attend is just a block away from the 10 freeway. The constant exposure to air pollution caused my two siblings and me to have difficulty breathing and were diagnosed with asthma. This has become common for many families like mine and communities of color around the state. Due to California's unique

pollution problems the Air Resources Board, in a public process, has developed rules to truly make improvements to our air quality and provide the much-needed health benefits to our frontline communities. But this is not new to all of you at EPA.

According to EPA's recent *Transportation Pollution and Environmental Justice Fact Sheet*, there are 72 million Americans living in close proximity to major trucking routes, and those people tend to be lower-income and people of color. These people are disproportionately impacted by pollution and therefore more likely to experience health impacts – respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

In California, trucks make up less than 5 percent of vehicle population, but release the most health harming emissions, including particle and smog pollution. The majority of trucks travel through communities of color. California needs these waivers approved to reduce health harming emissions from trucks and create a pathway to zero emission trucks.

In closing, we urge EPA to grant the waivers without delay to ensure the air quality, public health and environmental justice benefits of these rules follow.