

Testimony of Harold P. Wimmer
President and CEO, American Lung Association
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
**Re: Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) appropriations for key public health programs within the
Environmental Protection Agency**

May 15, 2024

Summary of FY 2025 Appropriations Recommendations:

EPA topline – \$12 billion
Clean Air Program overall – \$915.5 million
Climate Protection Program – \$181.2 million
Categorical Grants: State and Local Air Quality Management – \$500 million
Categorical Grants: Tribal Air Quality Management – \$57.4 million
Compliance Monitoring – \$162.1 million
Enforcement – \$391.4 million
Environmental Justice - \$369.1 million
Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program – \$150 million
EPA Radon Program - \$5 million
Categorical Grant: Radon – \$18 million
Wildfire Smoke Preparedness - \$15 million
Office of Air and Radiation, Indoor Environments Division - \$100 million

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the funding priorities of the American Lung Association within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for fiscal year 2025 (FY25). The American Lung Association is the trusted champion for lung health, working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. We urge the Committee to support \$12 billion in funding for the Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA programs play an important role in efforts to improve lung health and save lives. The Agency is responsible for setting and enforcing national air pollution standards, supporting air quality monitoring, implementing emissions reductions and educating the public about the health harms of pollution. Air pollution poses a threat to the health of all Americans, but some individuals are at elevated risk. There are 34.4 million Americans living with a chronic lung disease like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Children, seniors, individuals who are pregnant and people who work and play outside are also more likely to suffer health harms. Additionally, people of color and people with low incomes are often exposed to air pollution at a higher rate. The Lung Association’s 2024 “State of the Air” report

found that nearly 70 million people of color and 16 million people with incomes meeting the federal poverty definition live in counties that received a failing grade for ozone and/or particle pollution.¹

EPA is also responsible for administering grants to states, localities, Tribes and other entities to improve health by improving air quality and climate resilience. While legislation passed in the past few years provided necessary increases in funding for communities to see relief from the impacts of pollution and climate change, it does not replace the need for funding the agency's core programs and infrastructure. The American Lung Association urges robust investments in the following key programs:

Provide \$915.5 million for EPA's Clean Air program. EPA is the agency responsible for protecting the public from air pollution and the Clean Air program is necessary to meeting that responsibility. Through this funding line, EPA assists states, Tribes and localities with implementing comprehensive air quality management programs and provides testing and oversight to ensure unlawful pollution is not impacting the health of communities. Please provide \$694.6 million for Environmental Programs and Management and \$220.9 million for Science and Technology.

Provide \$500 million for State and Local Air Quality Monitoring Grants and \$57.4 million for Tribal Air Quality Monitoring Grants. Accurately monitoring air quality is necessary to ensure resources to clean up pollution are spent effectively and deliver benefits to the areas in need of pollution cleanup. Unfortunately, state, local and Tribal air agencies – who run the nation's official air quality monitoring system – continue to face budget shortfalls and many are operating with out-of-date monitors. Supplemental funding passed over the past few years was necessary to progress towards an expanded and more efficient network, but it was not a replacement for regular and dependable appropriations. Both the National Association of Clean Air Agencies and the National Tribal Air Association conducted baseline needs assessments of their members to determine what would be needed to successfully implement programs under current and anticipated federal requirements. The results showed that air agencies need increases if they are to adequately protect health by monitoring air pollution levels.^{2,3}

Provide \$162.1 million for Compliance Monitoring, \$391.4 million for enforcement and \$369.1 million for environmental justice efforts. Enforcing EPA's science-backed air quality

¹ The American Lung Association. State of the Air, April 2024 <https://www.lung.org/sota>

² National Association of Clean Air Agencies FY 2025 Funding Recommendations October 2023 https://www.4cleanair.org/wp-content/uploads/NACAA_FY_2025_Grant-Recommendations.pdf

³ National Tribal Air Association. Tribal Air Quality Priorities and the Resources to Address those Priorities: *Key Findings of the National Baseline Needs Assessment Among American Indian and Alaska Native Communities*, May 2022 <https://www.ntatribalair.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/5.5.22-NTAA-Baseline-Needs-Assessment-Key-Findings.pdf>

standards is necessary to truly achieve the rules' intended health benefits. EPA must have the resources and capacity to reduce non-compliance, as well as enforce penalties for violations. EPA must also be prepared to respond to civil enforcement actions authorized by the Clean Air Act. Additionally, air pollution does not impact everyone equally. Recognizing – and rectifying – the health disparities that come from air pollution requires dedicated funding and attention. We applaud the commitments to improving health disparities and urge that the funding matches that commitment.

Provide \$150 million for the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act and Support the Clean School Bus Program. The Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Program is a bipartisan program to clean up cancer-causing diesel emissions. There are millions of legacy diesel engines still in use today that emit large amounts of pollution, making efforts to improve diesel engine efficiency a public health imperative. And it's cost-effective, with monetized health benefits exceeding federal funding by a factor of 10. Additionally, we urge the Committee to continue supporting the rapid transition to zero emission school buses through the popular Clean School Bus Program. Over 600 school districts have received awards to replace over 5,000 diesel school buses with cleaner, low or zero-emission versions which will provide a safer, healthier environment for children, who are among those most at risk of health harm from breathing in pollution.

Provide \$5 million for EPA's Radon Program and \$18 million for State Indoor Radon Grants. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and is estimated to result in 21,000 deaths annually. EPA's radon program and its State Indoor Radon Grants are critical for reducing radon exposure and a necessary component of a comprehensive cancer reduction strategy. Significant progress has been made in reducing radon risks, but more than 90,000 homes each year still require radon fixes. There are also health disparities in radon exposure that need to be addressed, such as financial barriers to radon testing and mitigation lack of tenant protections. Additionally, we recommend that the Agency prioritize SIRG funding to states are seeking to adopt or strengthen certification requirements for radon measurement and mitigation workers, including the adoption of national consensus standards.

Please provide \$100 million for the Office of Air and Radiation/Indoor Environments Division and \$10 million to EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection. Indoor air pollution is particularly dangerous when it exists in classrooms full of children, who are more susceptible to health harms from breathing in toxins and pollutants. Pollution exposure can decrease attendance, negatively impact test scores and harm health such as by worsening asthma symptoms. 41% of school districts were found to be in need of HVAC repairs in at least half of their schools.⁴ Many school districts lack the education, training and resources to implement

⁴ Government Accountability Office. (2020). K-12 Education: School Districts Frequently Identified Multiple Building Systems Needing Updates or Replacement (GAO-20-494)

effective prevention measures, making EPA guidance and assistance necessary to access funding opportunities. Additionally, the Office of Children's Health Protection plays a critical role in researching children's risks and exposures in school and childcare facilities. Improving indoor air quality in schools will benefit kids health both in the short-term and long-term.

Please provide \$15 million for wildfire smoke preparedness. Wildfire smoke is an urgent threat to public health. States across the country – not just in the western US – have experienced the impacts that wildfire smoke can have on health. Furthering our understanding of the depth and magnitude of that health impact as well as identifying what interventions are most impactful will help officials respond in effective ways and spend resources wisely.

Oppose all policy riders. Lastly, the American Lung Association also asks for your leadership in opposing all policy riders that would weaken key lung health protections, including those in the Clean Air Act. Policy riders have no place in appropriations bills, and the Lung Association strongly opposes attempts to include them, especially riders that would make it harder to protect Americans from air pollution.

Investments in EPA programs are critical to protecting public health. On behalf of the Lung Association, I thank you for your consideration of these requests.