

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you to strongly advocate for phasing out old diesel engines and upholding stronger air standards, standards that are in place in many surrounding states and that have already been clearly shown to benefit health, the environment, and the community (much less the world). It is very unfortunate that prior efforts and legislation to curtail diesel emissions could not be sustained. We cannot let this happen again.

As a pulmonologist, I directly see the devastating effects of poor air quality and lifetimes of exposure to particulate matter, including diesel, on my patients on a daily basis. They suffer doing the simplest of activities and have a greatly reduced quality of life. There is a great body of literature supporting such pollution as a causative factor for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which is now the 3rd leading cause of death in the US and contributes to billions of dollars of direct healthcare expenditures (and similar levels of indirect costs related to lost work hours). There is a growing body of evidence describing childhood asthma development resulting from air pollution. Moreover, there are clear links to both COPD and asthma exacerbations across the age spectrum in relation to poor air quality; exacerbations increase morbidity and mortality, lead to further lost school and work hours, contribute immensely to inpatient and outpatient healthcare costs, and the cycles of inflammation associated with such disease flares can actually cause irreversible airway damage leading to increased severity of COPD and even progress baseline asthma to a permanently obstructive state that physiologically mirrors COPD caused from smoking damage.

As a mother, the impact of uncontrolled diesel emissions is frightening to the core of my soul. To think of my 2 young boys going to school and playing on the playground, while innocently breathing in air containing invisible particles that can cross into the blood stream and cause lung and bladder cancer is anathema. Children are more vulnerable to such pollution due to their physiologic growth and increased respiratory rate. And, whether a child has asthma or any other chronic lung disease, sustained or intermittent exposures to high diesel emission counts, can make them sicker, weaker, and more vulnerable to infections and chronic diseases affecting organs outside of the lungs.

As a citizen of Portland, the United States of America, and the world, climate change is a force not to be taken lightly and we need to strive to combat this process in any way that we can. Diesel emissions contain black carbon, a compound 2nd only to carbon dioxide, in its ability to contribute to devastating climate change. Limiting such emissions will help battle climate change and we need to join our fellow states who have already taken a stand on this issue.

I know that money is a huge driving force for lobbyists, large corporations, and government. It is time for us to stop being so shortsighted with political agendas. I urge you to step back and see the larger picture here. Yes, cutting diesel emissions will cost money AT FIRST. However, in the long run, the money saved on missed school and work hours, doctors visits, drug costs, and hospitalizations will far out-weigh these costs. And, can you really put a price on the lives saved, both young and old? No, you can't. We need to make the right decisions AT LAST. We need to take responsibility and take a stand; we cannot afford to do otherwise, our children cannot afford to do otherwise, our earth cannot afford to do otherwise.

Please, make the right decision and limit diesel emissions.

Sincerely,

Danielle Hosmer, MD, FCCP
Respiratory Director, Legacy Medical Group