Testimony on EPA's Proposed Rulemaking for "National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone" Docket Number EPA-HQ-OAR-2008-0699

Mandy Warner

Environmental Defense Fund

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My name is Mandy Warner and I am with Environmental Defense Fund, a non-partisan, non-profit environmental organization with more than 1,000,000 members nationwide. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Ozone, the main component of photochemical smog, is a harmful air pollutant that is associated with adverse health effects like asthma and other respiratory diseases and is even linked to early death. EPA's proposal to strengthen the current national, health-based standard for ozone to a range that is consistent with the recommendations of our nation's leading scientists and public health and medical professionals is critical to protect the health of our children, families, and communities and to ensure that all Americans know whether the air they are breathing is safe. In finalizing these important public health standards, EDF respectfully urges EPA to set the standard for ozone at 60 parts per billion (ppb) as the scientific record demonstrates that this level would provide the strongest public health protections for Americans.

Strong Foundation for Action to Protect Public Health and Welfare

In 1970, Congress established an effective process in the fight against air pollution. A bi-partisan majority in Congress determined that the nation's health-based air quality standards ("NAAQS") be based on public health considerations alone. Then, in determining how to achieve these health standards, states and municipalities thoroughly consider economics in developing the strategies best suited to their own circumstances. This dual system has been time-tested, congressionally mandated, and reaffirmed by the Supreme Court.

The Science is Clear and Compels EPA to Update the Standards

As EPA is well-aware, exposure to ozone can harm the respiratory system, aggravate asthma and other lung diseases, and is linked to early death from respiratory and cardiovascular causes. People with asthma, children, and older adults are among the populations most at risk from breathing air containing ozone. EPA's independent Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) has indicated the current standard is inadequate to protect public health and recommended a standard in the range of 60 to 70 ppb. Furthermore, CASAC emphasized that "[a]t 70 ppb, there is substantial scientific evidence of adverse effects…including decrease in lung function, increase in respiratory symptoms, and increase in airway inflammation." CASAC was clear that a standard of 60 ppb would offer more public health protection than a standard of 65 or 70.

CASAC's recommendation and EPA's analysis reflected in the proposal are based on an extensive and compelling body of scientific evidence. Since the last proposal, there have been more than 1,000 new studies that demonstrate the health and environmental harms of ozone. EPA's analysis highlights the clear, profound health benefits of strengthening the ozone standard to 60 ppb. Under a standard of 60 ppb, for example, EPA projects as many as 7,900 fewer deaths, 1.8 million fewer asthma attacks in children, and 9.2 million fewer minor restricted activity days or lost school days. Indeed, EPA estimates at this level of protection the monetized benefits in 2025 will be $37–75 billion.

Economic Progress and Clean Air Standards

Naysayers that use hyperbolic language when describing the economic impacts of strengthening clean air standards have not produced any credible evidence to support their claims of economic harm stemming from reducing ozone pollution. The US has four-and-a-half decades of implementing the Clean Air Act, while maintaining strong economic growth. In 1997, during another debate over strengthened national ozone standards, Senator Spencer Abraham (R-MI) was among those who claimed that the new standards would have serious economic impacts, he stated: "Dry cleaning establishments, hair salons, and other small businesses will not be able to absorb the increased costs imposed by these regulations." These claims of economic doom and

gloom did not come to pass, as has been the case with other instances of strengthening public health standards.

In an extensive report assessing the costs and benefits of the Clean Air Act, EPA found that the net benefits of the Clean Air Act from 1970 to 1990 are valued at over $21 trillion. By 2020, the EPA estimates the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments will prevent a projected 230,000 deaths; 2.4 million asthma attacks; and 5.4 million lost school days. EPA also found that these vital health protections would provide $2 trillion in monetized benefits. Additionally, EPA projects a net overall improvement in economic growth due to the benefits of cleaner air.

As in the past, our nation has commonsense and cost-effective solutions already moving forward that will help to achieve a more protective ozone standard and restore healthy air. These solutions include clean air measures, supported by the U.S. auto industry, that will dramatically reduce the smog-forming emissions from new cars beginning in model year 2017 and the landmark Clean Power Plan that will reduce a suite of health-harming emissions from power plants.

Local Impacts

We know that the health benefits of reducing ozone are substantial and that—in part due to clean air standards already in effect and expected to be implemented—we can achieve cost-effective, lifesaving reductions of ozone as we have done in the past. Here in the nation's capital we face high levels of ozone. The most recent American Lung Association State of the Air Report gave D.C. an "F" grade on ozone. The Washington, D.C. region ranked 8th out of the 277 metropolitan areas ALA examined for high ozone days.[i] We also know that rising temperatures from our changing climate will worsen ozone challenges in some places and that communities will need help reducing ozone pollution now and in the future.

Setting the ozone standard to 60 ppb will help those of us in D.C. and across the country breathe easier.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We will be submitting further technical comments to EPA.

[i] http://www.stateoftheair.org/2014/msas/washington-baltimore-arlington-dc-md-va-wv-pa.html#ozone