

Surbhi Sarang, Environmental Defense Fund, Testimony for February 14, 2019 EPA Public Hearing on Review of Standards of Performance for Greenhouse Gas Emissions From New, Modified, and Reconstructed Stationary Sources: Electric Utility Generating Units, 83 Fed. Reg. 65,424 (Dec. 20, 2018), Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0495

My name is Surbhi Sarang and I'm an Attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund. We urge EPA to withdraw the proposal, which would significantly weaken protections from carbon pollution for new coal-fired power plants. Communities across the country are already grappling with the devastating impacts of climate change, and this proposal would only further risk public health and welfare—particularly for the most vulnerable among us.

Climate science has established that to protect from the worst impacts of climate change we must achieve net zero emissions by mid-century. Yet, our current trajectory falls far short of achieving this goal. EPA has authority and indeed a mandate under the Clean Air Act to require emissions be reduced as much as practicable and the 2015 NSPS demonstrated that more aggressive reductions from new coal plants are achievable. It is thus legally and morally unsound for EPA to undo those protections.

Recent reports and trends underscore the need for EPA regulations to push for rapid decarbonization. Contrary to what this EPA administration has suggested, power sector CO₂ declines are not happening quickly enough or on a large enough scale on their own to justify EPA inaction. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, power sector CO₂ emissions actually *rose* during the first ten months of 2018 as compared to 2017. Because even one new coal-fired power plant would commit us to decades of carbon emissions we cannot afford, minimizing pollution from any new coal-fired power plants that are built is essential.

This is exactly what the current standards would do. The standards that EPA proposes to weaken would reduce carbon pollution from a new coal-fired power plant by 16 to 23 percent, based on technology that has been demonstrated for decades. EPA reviewed a robust technical record and concluded that partial CCS is adequately demonstrated, can be implemented at reasonable cost, and that the final standard is achievable. EPA noted CCS is commercially available and is being successfully utilized by EGUs.

EPA's proposal not only ignores the voluminous record supporting the current standard, it also arbitrarily ignores the harmful impacts of climate change on human health and well-being. These impacts have never been clearer or more urgent. NOAA reported that in 2018 there were 14 separate weather and climate disasters, including Hurricanes Michael and Florence and the wildfires that burned across the West, that killed at least 247 people and cost the nation 90 billion dollars. Climate scientists have said that climate change is impacting and will impact the frequency, intensity, and duration of these extreme events including hurricanes, droughts, wildfires, winter storms, thunderstorms, and extreme heat.

Some studies also linked the severity of the recent polar vortex to warming in the arctic, and this event demonstrates not just how climate change is already impacting lives but also how vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted. My family were among those in Chicago

where offices, schools, and courts were closed, trains and flights were delayed and canceled, and homes experienced damage from frozen pipes and cracked windows. The New York Times reported injuries and at least 21 deaths. But among those especially impacted were people who are homeless without adequate shelter or clothing, people who are incarcerated at a federal prison in Brooklyn that did not have heat for several days, and low-income populations who have to make trade-offs between heat and food.

It is thus arbitrary for EPA to propose to increase carbon pollution limits on new coal-fired power plants substantially from 1400 to 1900 pounds of CO₂ per MWh. EPA itself acknowledges that the new standard will barely achieve any emissions reductions from coal plants subject to it because new plants are already meeting and expected to meet this standard. And the proposal requires no further action from them. This drastically fails the Clean Air Act's goal to set standards which push for broad deployment of state-of-the-art technology to achieve the greatest emission reductions practicable. In consideration of law, science, and environmental justice, EPA must withdraw the proposal and maintain or strengthen the current standard.