



Testimony of

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DOEE Air Quality Division
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Hello, my name is Brenda Lee Richardson. I am a Ward 8 resident and Coordinator of APACC, the Anacostia Parks & Community Collaborative. Our membership, which includes environmental experts and diverse local voices, reflects our community-first vision for how the Anacostia River and park system can support the physical, mental and economic well-being of district residents. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Department of Energy & Environment's air quality monitoring in the district.

Last summer's wildfire events caused a haze of smoke to sweep across the region, exposing millions of people to a dangerous mix of tiny soot particles, ash, and noxious gasses. Here in the district, we experienced the unhealthiest air quality in years with several days of Code Orange and Code Red air quality forcing DC public schools to cancel all outdoor activities like recess and prompting Mayor Bower to urge residents to stay indoors as much as possible.

We all know the climate crisis creates conditions that contribute to hotter and longer heat waves, making for bigger and smokier fires. But what does this mean for the long-term health of district residents?

When the National Ambient Air Quality Standards were established in 1970, air pollution was regarded primarily as a threat to respiratory health. But over the past five decades, we now know that exposure to air pollution can cause or worsen a number of medical conditions including reproductive, neurological, and immune system disorders. Children are particularly vulnerable because their organs and immune systems are still developing, and growing up breathing high levels of dirty air can lead to lifelong health problems.

Air pollution is a familiar environmental health hazard, from vehicle exhaust billowing across a busy highway or as a plume of white smoke rising from an industrial plant. But before we can address its harms, we must first know how bad the situation is. That is why I am calling on DOEE, regardless of whether the exemptions for last year's dirty air days are granted, to do more air quality monitoring across the district, but especially in places where people live or work near sources of pollution.

In Ward 8, for example, children are almost 10 times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma compared to other parts of the district. While many factors contribute to this difference, the presence of 295, the city's only major highway that cuts through Anacostia Park and averages over 130,000 vehicles every day, is a significant factor. But how often is the air in the park tested for pollutants? Disfavored communities

east of the river have been waiting for air quality monitoring sites similar to the ones setup in other parts of the city and want to know when they will be installed. APACC is ready to work with DOEE to find locations that offer the technical infrastructure necessary to operate air testing equipment and mobile units. But we cannot afford to wait any longer. Thank you.