

My name is Dr. Harry Wang. I am the president of the Sacramento chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility and represent our 700 local members as well as representing national PSR and 50,000 members nation-wide.

My daughter was six months old when she first started wheezing. By age five, she had learned how to mix up her own medication for a breathing treatment.

[nebulizer is turned on]

Whenever I hear the sound of the nebulizer, a machine that delivers medication into the lungs to reverse the narrowing of the airways, I think of the many sleepless nights I stayed up with my daughter giving her treatments so she could breathe and fall back asleep. When she was eight, she was hospitalized because of a severe asthma attack that did not respond to these treatments. My wife and I will never forget how terrified we were when she was being admitted to the hospital gasping for air and needing extra oxygen.

Air pollution had long been a professional concern for me—I had been a pediatrician and treated many asthmatics—but this experience with my daughter elevated the issue to a highly personal and very frightening level.

Although the quality of the air we breathe has improved significantly since 1970, when a bipartisan Congress passed the Clean Air Act, millions of Americans are still experiencing for themselves variations of my family's story—and not always with a happy ending. And that is why I am here at today's hearing—to urge the EPA to set the strongest standards for the air that we breathe.

Living in California essentially all of my life, I am personally aware of the poor air quality in the Central Valley, in Southern California, and here in Sacramento. The top five most soot polluted-cities in the United States are in California. Sacramento is ranked 21st in the

country for highest short-term particle pollution.

That is why this hearing is in California and why we need cleaner air.

The current annual standard for particulate matter has been unchanged since it was first set in 1997. Since then there have been numerous peer-reviewed research articles clearly linking soot pollution with heart and lung disease, strokes, cancer, and premature death. In fact, previous studies may have *underestimated* the health risks. Scientists now question whether there is any “safe” level of exposure to fine particle pollution and believe that even transient peaks of exposure can affect our health.

The EPA released its proposal to tighten limits on soot pollution just last month, but this major development occurred only because of a lawsuit by a coalition of public health and environmental groups. The proposal is a welcome development but it's not strong enough.

Here's what's needed: I am joining many public health professionals in calling for an annual limit of 11 micrograms of particulate matter per cubic meter and a daily limit of 25 micrograms of particulate matter per cubic meter. Both short- and long-term exposure to soot can lead to heart and lung disease, stroke, cancer, and premature death—hence an annual and a daily limit.

We especially owe it to vulnerable populations—children, seniors, diabetics, people with lung and heart disease, and low-income communities—to ensure that the air they're breathing is safe. I enjoy the great outdoors—my family and I travel to the Sierra Nevada every year to experience its magnificent beauty. But even these places are marred by soot pollution, and repeated exposure to such dirty air is a danger to everyone.

In medicine, prevention is always preferable than treating illness. If the EPA chooses the stronger soot standards, lives and money would be saved and there would be less illness.

How many lives? A recent study found that stronger limits on soot pollution would prevent nearly 36,000 premature deaths nationwide *every year*. And in addition to dramatically cutting air pollution-induced deaths, stronger soot limits would also prevent more than 23,000 trips annually to the hospital and emergency rooms, 1.4 million cases of aggravated asthma, and 2.7 million days of missed work or school each year.

The health benefits would also create financial savings of \$281 billion every year from reduced costs associated with premature death and disease. That's right, \$281 billion every year!

I urge the EPA to fulfill your mission to protect human health as you set the new standard. You have all of the scientific studies at hand. Do not allow industry or politics to influence your decision. Do not allow corporate interests to outweigh the health and welfare of the American people.

Science, medicine and the law all require the EPA to defend our health by setting the strongest standards for soot pollution. We look forward to your decision in December and urge you to do the right thing!