

June 4, 2021

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

As national health, medical and nursing organizations, we are writing to express our concern at reports that EPA may not be planning to release an updated National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) using 2017 data, as was expected this year. We are requesting that the agency release this important public health information as quickly as possible.

Our organizations and the physicians, nurses, public health professionals and patients we represent are committed advocates for urgent action to clean up air pollution, curb climate change and advance environmental justice. The National Air Toxics Assessment is important to our shared mission, and to the health of our members and our constituents.

The Clean Air Act has achieved significant reductions in emissions of toxic air pollution nationwide. But exposure to these pollutants, which include benzene, toluene, dioxin, asbestos, mercury and over one hundred others, are still a serious concern due to their wide ranging and persistent health effects. Depending on the pollutant, short-term exposure can lead to eye irritation, nausea, and difficulty in breathing. Long-term exposure may cause cancer, damage to the nervous system and brain, reduced fertility, birth and developmental defects, and other serious health problems.

As we understand it, EPA staff have already invested considerable effort in compiling and analyzing the 2017 data and it is nearly ready to share with the states and communities that depend on it to protect the health of their citizens. If an updated NATA is released as planned, 2017 data will replace the 2014 data in the current version of NATA, which was released in 2018.

Up-to-date NATA data are critical to state and local efforts to identify pollutants, sources, and areas of concern and to establish links between exposures to air toxics and public health. NATA is also an important component of EPA's EJScreen, the agency's environmental justice screening and mapping tool. As the Biden Administration and the nation work to redress our long history of environmental inequities, it is more important than ever to get credible information into the hands of disproportionately burdened communities. The accuracy of environmental justice analyses and the effectiveness of mitigation efforts depend on access to recent high quality data.

We appreciate the stated intentions of the Biden Administration and EPA to restore the role of sound science, transparency and community engagement in government, as well as its actions to prioritize health and environmental justice in it