

Testimony before the Environmental Quality Board  
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by  
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Good afternoon. My name is Duane Fickeisen and I am one of the pastors of the Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley in Boiling Springs. I also serve on the board of the Clean Air Board of Central Pennsylvania. I speak as a religious leader in support of the proposed regulation of idling.

Thank you for the efforts you have made to craft an effective and reasonable proposed regulation. I feel it is an excellent example of citizens and government working together to improve the quality of life in our state.

I am concerned about the health impacts of PM<sub>2.5</sub> in the air we breathe. Members of the congregation I serve reside throughout the Cumberland Valley. Several of them suffer from respiratory and cardiac ailments. Some of them have expressed to me the belief that high PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels impact their breathing. They have noticed that they are especially affected on days when the Air Quality Index is high, primarily due to fine particulates. This continues to have serious effects on the quality of their lives.

While the Carlisle/Harrisburg area is among the worst in the nation for fine particulate air pollution, other parts of Pennsylvania — especially the Pittsburgh, Allentown, and Philadelphia areas — also experience unhealthy levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

It is my understanding of the medical research on effects of exposure to fine particulates that no safe level has been established, that even relatively small reductions in exposure have been estimated to provide significant health benefits, and that even short-term exposure to high concentrations increases the risk of heart attack. Further, I understand that exposure to fine particulates causes abnormal lung development in children that is irreversible.

I am especially concerned about the people who are frequently exposed to high concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub> for long periods, including those who spend much of their time near diesel exhaust sources — on highways, at or near warehouses and trucking facilities, in or near school busses, for example. Professional drivers, highway construction crews, police and other emergency responders, and school children seem particularly vulnerable as does anyone who lives or works within 1000 feet of a highway, truck route, or trucking facility.

My religion teaches that we have a compelling responsibility to care for every person in our community — to practice a radical hospitality that cares for all. We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We also teach, along with virtually all of the world's religions, that

we are called to be effective stewards of the Earth. Unitarian Universalists are called to respect the interdependent web of all existence. Whether you arrive at the call to stewardship from an understanding that God created it, saw that it was good, and charged us to care for it; from the belief that we owe it to future generations to protect the planet; or from the standpoint that it just makes sense not to foul our own nest, I think most people would agree that we should take our stewardship seriously.

Not only that, but the Commonwealth's Constitution includes a declaration of rights, which includes this language in Section 27, titled Natural Resources and the Public Estate:

“The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.”

That seems pretty clear to me. As an agency of the Commonwealth, as one of the trustees of these resources, the people have a right to expect that you'll act to protect, conserve, and maintain clean air.

The proposed regulation is balanced. It grants what seems an appropriate time line for the installation of alternative ways for drivers to maintain comfort in truck cabs during rest periods. With the rising costs of fuel, installation of alternative systems is cost effective.

I don't expect that this regulation alone will solve all the problems of fine particulates in our air. It may not even bring us into attainment with Federal air quality standards, but I do believe it will be helpful, that it has the potential to make a difference, and that it will not be unfair or burdensome to drivers.

Exposure to high levels of PM2.5 impacts the quality of life of people who suffer from respiratory ailments and reduces their life expectancy. Children who are exposed to it may never develop normal lung capacity, with permanent impacts on their lives.

Our Constitution asserts that clean air is a right of the people and promises us that the Commonwealth will protect it. From a religious and ethical perspective, we have a responsibility to be good stewards of the Earth's resources, including the very air we breathe.

The proposed regulation would be a step toward fulfilling the role of trustee for public natural resources. I urge your adoption of it.

Thank you.