

December 2, 2024  
Illinois Pollution Control Board  
60 E. Van Buren St., Ste. 630  
Chicago, Illinois 60605

*Comments in Support of Proposed Clean Car and Truck Standards (R2024-017)*

My name is Dr. Ozuru Ukoha, and I am writing as Chair of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Stroger Hospital of Cook County, the largest public hospital in Illinois and a Local Leadership Board Member of the American Lung Association in Greater Chicago. We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of adopting the proposed clean car and truck standards, which are critical to reducing air pollution in Illinois.

For 20 years, Stroger Hospital has been the flagship of Cook County Health and continues to be at the forefront of new therapies and innovations in healthcare. The 450-bed teaching hospital serves as the hub for Cook County Health for delivery of specialty and sub-specialty care. We are home to one of the busiest Level 1 trauma centers in the nation and the hospital's emergency room treats approximately 120,000 adults and children annually.

At Stroger, we also see a significant number of patients who are negatively affected by air pollution. Most of Stroger's patients are from low-income communities and communities of color, which too often bear disproportionate health burdens from air pollution broadly, and trucking pollution, specifically. Low-income families are often the ones dealing with some of the most severe and complex lung health problems and experiencing the worst health outcomes while also struggling to afford basic needs and medications. Even with insurance, it is expensive and time-consuming to manage chronic respiratory conditions (like asthma, emphysema, and COPD) and address acute illnesses (like asthma attacks, bronchitis and pneumonia) that can cause permanent damage to the lungs and overall health and well-being of the patient if not adequately treated. Poor air quality increases the chances that acute health issues will arise, adding further to the burden for people with lung conditions and their families.

Given that transportation continues to be a leading source of harmful air and climate emissions in Illinois, I support the adoption of the clean vehicle standards—the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT), Heavy-Duty Low-NOx Omnibus (HDO) and Advanced Clean Cars II (ACCI)—because of the air quality and lung health benefits these standards will provide for my patients and the communities.

Air pollution is a pervasive issue in Illinois that disproportionately affects certain communities. The American Lung Association's "[State of the Air](#)" 2024 report found that five counties in Illinois received an "F" grade and more than half of all counties with reported data received a "C" or lower grade for high ozone days. Furthermore, 71% of people of color in Illinois live in these counties with a failing grade for ozone pollution,

despite making up 41% of the population. Nearly 75% of Illinoisans experiencing poverty live in a county with a 'C' or below grade. These discrepancies are driven by pollution in high-traffic corridors, in which nearby residents are more likely to be exposed to harmful air pollution impacts, are more likely to have lower incomes, and be people of color compared to the national population.

Air pollution affects the health of everyone, but is particularly harmful for children, seniors, and people with pre-existing conditions, which explains why it disproportionately impacts people with lower incomes and people of color who are more likely to live near transportation corridors. Ozone ("smog") and particle ("soot") pollutants can cause various respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses such as asthma attacks, worsening COPD, lung cancer, ischemic heart disease, congestive heart failure, heart attacks, and strokes.

As a health professional, my colleagues and I must provide health care and education around the consequences of poor air quality. Since we see and follow many of these patients for many years, we are acutely aware of the immediate and long-term impacts of poor air quality and experience the increased burden this places on a safety net health system such as ours and on the communities they reside in. In our professional lives, we work to advise patients on options to mitigate exposure to poor air quality, which for some, might mean skipping a baseball game or avoiding playing in the playground closest to a family's home.

I strongly support the request in the petition to adopt clean vehicle standards. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ozuru Ukoha, MD  
Chair, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery  
John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County

Greater Chicago Local Leadership Board Member  
American Lung Association

**From:** [Ukoha, Ozuru](#)  
**To:** [PCB.Clerks](#)  
**Cc:** [Kristina Hamilton](#)  
**Subject:** [External] Air Pollution  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 27, 2024 7:42:41 PM  
**Attachments:** [R24-17 Ozuru Ukoha Public Comment Final.pdf](#)

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Dear Pollution Control Board,

Please find attached my comments which are together a plea to you in support of the Proposed Clean Car and Truck Standards (R2024-017). This is one of the few initiatives that can boast of saving lives and having a positive economic impact for all. In 2021, air pollution resulted in an estimated death rate of 63,600 in the US and cost at least 5% of the GDP which amounts to almost \$800 billion. Together, we can chip away at these monstrous numbers through the important work you do.

Thank you-

Ozuru O. Ukoha, MD