

Testimony to the Pollution Control Board

My name is Richard Rutschman, EdD. I am a member of Third Act, which is a group of elders who are concerned about what we are leaving to the future generations regarding our planet and our democratic system. I spent my professional career in education. I worked as a teacher, counselor, principal and program administrator in various schools and for over 25 years with Northeastern Illinois University working with schools to improve students' educational outcomes in Chicago Public Schools. Traffic Related Air Pollution has serious consequences not only for the students and their families lives, but for their educational growth and development as well as their physical and psychological health.

A Google Scholar search on the effect of traffic related air pollution on school children showed around 525,000 articles, while this year alone showed 17,500 articles. A review of all these studies shows serious consequences for childhood development and health. Studies showed:

- Air pollution is a suspected developmental neurotoxicant and children attending schools with higher traffic-related air pollution had a smaller improvement in cognitive development (Sunyer, J. et al, 2015)
- The short-term association of traffic-related air pollutants cause fluctuations in attention with retardation of natural development, and as a result it is feared to interfere with neurodevelopment. (Sunyer, J. et al, 2017)
- Exposure to Traffic Related Air Pollution at school was associated with increased behavioral problems in schoolchildren and noise exposure at school was associated with more ADHD symptoms (Forns, J. et al, 2016).
- There was a positive association between Traffic Related Air Pollution exposure and the development of asthma, caused by pollutants PM2.5 and benzene.
- Meta-analysis showed a relationship between air pollution and depression and anxiety disorder. (Cao, T et al, 2024).
- A review of studies showed that minimizing air pollution and traffic noise while enhancing urban vegetation, in school environments, helps to ensure the healthy development of children and promote lifelong health (Roche, I. V. et al, 2024).

Thousands of Illinois Children particularly near metropolitan areas like Chicago are suffering severe consequences from the transportation industry. As much as 85% of air pollution exposure to children is caused by transportation near their schools.

If we care about the development of the coming generations, we need to make sure that they are developing in an optimal and safe environment. Traffic Related Air Pollution must be curtailed at immediately.

Third Act members like myself are motivated as we approach the last phase of our lives to do what we can to care about the future and the sustainability of our life on earth, a place of beauty and awe that we love. The climate crisis has become an emergency and the transportation sector in our society needs to make a quick transition away from energy that emits green house gases like CO2. Third Act members like myself are not

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John Rutschman, EdD

alone in believing this, according to CBS, 70% of Americans favor the US taking steps to address climate change and a majority think it should be right now. CBS News 04/21/24.

The consequences of moving too slow on these changes will be a regret that some day the future generations will either ask why wasn't more done more quickly or if we take action now they will appreciate the belated forethought and quick action that we take today. The decision you make here in Illinois regarding clean energy for trucks and buses is of critical importance. We need to move away from diesel and gasoline, we have no choice.

In conclusion: The Pollution Control Board has an immensely important role in helping this transition take place quickly. Our children's health and development are depending on it as is our empathy for the current and next generations. We owe it to humanity and other living creatures and the ecosystems we depend on to live to take action now.

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Nazari et al

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