

July 24, 2020

US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC

RE: An amendment to the Environment and Interior Division of H.R. 7608, the first appropriations  
minibus for Fiscal Year 2021

Dear Representative:

Our organizations write to express strong support for Amendment 67 put forward by Representatives Blunt Rochester, Rush, and McEachin, which would block EPA from finalizing its do-nothing update to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM 2.5, also known as soot. This administration's failure to follow the science and listen to the medical experts will disproportionately harm lower-income families and communities of color, who are more likely to live in areas that fail to meet federal clean air standards, and who are experiencing higher than average rates of death and sickness from the COVID-19 pandemic because of their exposure to unsafe local air.

Soot is an extremely dangerous pollutant, a deadly mix of metals, chemicals, and acid gases that are so small they can be inhaled deeply into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. There are ample peer-reviewed studies clearly showing that a stronger standard is justified and would save many lives. EPA's data estimates that even if the air quality around the country met the existing PM 2.5 standard that 50,000 lives would still be prematurely lost. There is no real debate: we need stronger clean air protections. This administration's failure to act to protect Americans would have been unacceptable even without a global respiratory pandemic. Given COVID-19's disproportionate impact on already pollution-burdened and struggling communities, now their actions are just cruel and outrageous.

The American people deserve leaders who listen to doctors and scientists and take the bold and necessary steps to protect our health and well-being. Please support this amendment and allow the EPA to start over and do their job to protect public health and the environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Earthjustice  
Environmental Defense Fund