

June 30, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL URGES THE EPA TO STRENGTHEN STANDARDS REGULATING PARTICULATE MATTER POLLUTION

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul joined a coalition of 17 attorneys general urging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to withdraw its arbitrary and capricious proposal to leave the current National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate matter pollution unchanged and to instead strengthen those standards.

[In a comment letter submitted today](#), Raoul and the coalition point out that the EPA's own science, which already underestimates risk, shows that deaths from fine, inhalable particulate matter (PM2.5) emissions range from 16,000 to 17,000 annually. In addition to premature mortality, particulate matter is linked to many serious public health problems including cardiovascular disease, respiratory impacts and cancer. Particulate matter is a pollutant emitted from a variety of sources including vehicles, factories and construction sites, and research shows that low-income and minority communities are disproportionately exposed to particulate matter and the associated health risks.

"This proposal puts millions of lives at risk by permitting pollution that will contribute to many preventable health problems and place further strain on our already over-burdened health care system," Raoul said. "I will continue to oppose any effort to loosen regulations of dangerous pollutants in our air."

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to set NAAQS for several pollutants including particulate matter. The standards must be set at a level that protects the public's health, safety and welfare. The EPA is then required to review the standards once every five years and revise them if new information shows that the existing standards are inadequate. The EPA's regulations have reduced annual concentrations of PM2.5 by 39 percent between 2000 and 2018; however, the science shows that stronger protections are necessary. Since the EPA's last review, the evidence shows a more clear link between exposure to particulate matter at levels below the current NAAQS and grievous health impacts.

In the comment letter, Raoul and the coalition argue that the EPA's proposal to retain the current particulate matter NAAQS is arbitrary and capricious because the agency has sought to suppress the compelling evidence necessitating stricter standards. Specifically, Raoul and the coalition state that the EPA blocked input from qualified scientists on whether to strengthen the pollution standard. As a result, Raoul and the coalition argue that the EPA's proposed rulemaking is not based on the best available scientific information and contains many infirmities in its scientific review.

Joining Raoul in filing the comment letter are the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.