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June 24, 2009

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman and Chairman Markey:

As you consider legislation to address global climate change and energy policy, the American Lung Association urges you to use this opportunity to target widespread pollutants that can both directly harm lung health of millions of Americans and worsen global climate change. At a minimum, we urge you to select mechanisms that prevent increases in ambient air pollution and hazardous air pollutants.

Over 186 million Americans continue to live and breathe in areas with unhealthy air in the United States. The American Lung Association supports aggressive strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that maximize co-benefits of reducing criteria pollutants and provide near-term public health benefits. These strategies include ambitious programs to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuel combustion and promote cleaner alternative vehicle technologies and fuels. These require real changes: substantial increases in clean renewable energy resources; a transformation of the land use planning process to emphasize smart growth policies that promote alternatives to driving; and, as well, significant reductions in power plant and industrial emissions.

We urge you to consider approaches that target two critical two critical pollutants well within reach—black carbon and ozone. Black carbon, or diesel soot, and ozone not only significantly impact global warming but also endanger public health. Black carbon from diesel, a mixture of 40 different toxic substances, increases the risk of developing lung cancer. Ozone, the most commonly encountered pollutant in America's cities, damages lung capacity and aggravates asthma. Both pollutants send people with asthma and other chronic lung diseases to the hospital and emergency room. Both cut short the lives of thousands of people every year. Because black carbon particles and ozone have significantly shorter life-spans in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, immediate controls can make a near-term difference in the level of global warming, as well as have immediate health benefits.

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The legislation should support state and local air pollution control efforts and include strong controls on major sources of emissions. Please include stronger controls on coal-fired power plants and other major industrial sources that also reduce sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury and other toxic air contaminant emissions.

The legislation should promote clean renewable electricity, including wind, solar and geothermal. The Lung Association urges that the legislation not promote the combustion of biomass. Burning biomass could lead to significant increases in emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and sulfur dioxide and have severe impacts on the health of children, older adults, and people with lung diseases.

The American Lung Association thanks you for the opportunity to share our perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "CD Connor".

Charles D. Connor
President & CEO