



July 9, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member  
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse,

On behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent announcements to reconsider critical environmental regulations, specifically the vehicle emission standards for light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicles, and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). MWAQC is the air quality planning commission for the National Capital Region, certified by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia to develop plans to attain federal air quality standards and improve air quality in the metropolitan Washington region.

### **Vehicle Emission Standards**

The EPA's decision to revisit the Multi-Pollutant Emissions Standards for Model Years 2027 and Later Light-Duty and Medium-Duty Vehicles, as well as the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles – Phase 3, poses significant risks to the progress our region has made in improving air quality. These standards were designed to reduce harmful air pollutants, including smog- and soot-forming emissions, and to promote the adoption of cleaner vehicle technologies, even though these standards are primarily meant for greenhouse gas emissions, they also affect criteria pollutants.

Reconsidering these standards could lead to increased emissions, adversely affecting public health, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions. Moreover, the transportation sector is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and weakening these standards undermines efforts to combat climate change.

### **National Ambient Air Quality Standards for PM<sub>2.5</sub>**

We are equally concerned about the EPA's plans to revisit the strengthened PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS set in February 2024, which lowered the annual standard to 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter to provide increased public health protection. Fine particulate matter is linked to serious health issues, including heart attacks, aggravated asthma, and premature death. Any attempt to weaken these standards could reverse the health benefits achieved and impede our region's ability to meet air quality goals.

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse  
May 30, 2025

### **Importance of Science-Based Policy**

MWAQC emphasizes the necessity of grounding environmental regulations in robust scientific evidence and public health considerations. The existing standards were established based on extensive research and consultation with scientific advisors to ensure adequate protection for public health and the environment. The use of science in regulatory processes should provide for the full use of all applicable studies to avoid regulatory uncertainties.

### **Economic and Health Impacts**

Rolling back these regulations threatens public health and has economic implications. Increased healthcare costs due to pollution-related illnesses and potential non-attainment of air quality standards could impose financial burdens on our communities and hinder economic development.

We urge the EPA to maintain the current vehicle emission standards and PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS to safeguard the health of our residents and the environment. Preserving these regulations is essential for continued progress in air quality improvement and public health protection.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We are committed to working collaboratively with the EPA to achieve our shared goals of clean air and a healthy environment for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Please contact Jen Desimone, COG Chief, Air Program, at 202-962-3360 or [jdesimone@mwccog.org](mailto:jdesimone@mwccog.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tom Dernoga  
Chair, Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee