August 4, 2022

Re: Advocating for environmental justice priorities for long term Light Duty Vehicle (LDV) standards

Dear Ms. McCarthy, Administrator Regan, and Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the undersigned environmental justice groups, locality-based organizations, and other advocacy groups, we write to urge the Biden administration to fulfill its obligation and responsibility to set longer term light duty vehicle (LDV) standards for model years 2027 and beyond. We ask that you set these standards by Fall 2022. This will safeguard overburdened environmental justice communities, make a significant positive impact toward the urgent goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent by 2030, and will put American cars and light-duty trucks on a clear path towards 100 percent zero emission electric vehicle (EV) sales by 2035.

The administration’s leadership in setting strong LDV standards and investing in electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure for cars, SUVs, pick-up trucks, and other light-duty EVs has been and will continue to be instrumental in effectively addressing the inequitable pollution impacts, barriers to access to EVs, and other challenges faced by Black and Latino/a/x communities.

We appreciate the work that President Biden and the administration have done to undo the Trump-era rollbacks by passing regulations for LDVs manufactured before 2027. We celebrated the enactment of the “Revised 2023 and Later Model Year Light-Duty Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards” rule in February 2022, an invaluable step in protecting the health of our communities and ensuring a clean transportation future for all.

We hope to continue to consider this administration as our ally in creating this future. With the urgent need to act swiftly and decisively at top of mind, we respectfully demand that the administration release proposed standards for model years 2027 and beyond by September 30, 2022.

We have no time to waste and momentum is on our side.
Transportation is the largest source of pollution that fuels the climate crisis in the US – it is critical that the Biden administration pass regulations to make our gasoline-powered cars and trucks more efficient and accelerate the shift to EVs. Today, we are at a critical nexus for clean transportation policy: We must drastically and permanently reduce air pollution from vehicles and transform our transportation landscape. Enacting stringent long term clean vehicle standards holds huge potential to significantly improve health and wellbeing for all people, particularly in communities of color which disproportionately bear the brunt of air pollution.

The EPA must set strong long term LDV standards in order to meet its obligation to protect families from vehicle pollution, save drivers money at the gas pump (or eliminate the need for these costs altogether), and fight climate change. Creating these standards will ensure that automakers make more efficient vehicles and push them to invest in new technology to significantly reduce emissions for the long term.

Strong LDV standards have the power to drive down vehicle pollution and spur the economy by saving consumers money while inspiring innovation in new clean car technologies and electrification. Moreover, by implementing long term stringent LDV standards, the EPA can continue to follow through on its stated commitment to environmental justice. Issuing stronger clean car standards will mitigate the disproportionate harms from dirty vehicle pollution experienced by environmental justice communities, which leads to increased rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

We know you know: Emissions from cars literally make us sick and kill us.

Communities of color are exposed to higher levels of air pollution from vehicles than their white counterparts. In California, Black and Latino/a/x residents experience more than 40 percent higher levels of fine particulate matter exposure than whites. (PM 2.5 are microscopic airborne particles that can penetrate deeply into the lung and impair lung function). In the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, the rate of exposure for Blacks and Latino/a/x communities reaches 61 percent and 75 percent higher, respectively. Nationwide, Black and Hispanic children experience consistently higher rates of asthma than white children, even in more affluent neighborhoods.

The systemic racial disparities in exposure to higher-than-average levels of PM 2.5, particularly for Black and Latino/a/x populations in the United States is well-documented. As a result of a legacy of disinvestment and discriminatory practices such as redlining, our communities live with more smog and fine particulates from various major polluting sources, including cars, trucks and buses. In the latest American Lung Association State of the Air report, people of color were 61 percent more likely to live in counties with failing national air quality standards, putting these communities at greater risk to severe health impacts and premature deaths than white people. These disparities have only increased over time relative to the air quality standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Strong LDV standards can prevent tailpipe pollutant exposure and eliminate completely
unnecessary health risks and deaths. We call on you to protect the communities that need it the most, and look forward to working with you to ensure that overburdened Black and Latino/a/x communities experience the full benefits of moving towards a clean, electrified transportation future. Again, we urge you to draft these new standards as soon as possible, ideally by this coming fall.

Sincerely,

Atlantic Climate Justice Alliance
Center for Biological Diversity
CleanAirNow
Coalition of Community Organizations
Connecticut Coalition for Economic and Environmental Justice
GreenLatinos
Pacific Environment
PODER
South Bronx Unite
The CLEO Institute
The Green Door Initiative
United Women in Faith
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
West End Revitalization Association (WERA)

Organizations signing in solidarity

Coltura
Conservation Law Foundation
Responsible Alpha ESG
Sierra Club
Waterway Advocates