It's Children's Health Month --- let's celebrate by stopping the rollback of the EPA's Mercury and Air Toxics Standard (MATS) proposal (Deadline Oct. 30)

Sending Office: Honorable Kim Schrier
Sent By: Jennifer.Cash@mail.house.gov

Request for Signature(s)

Dear Colleague:
In recognition of Children's Health month, please partner with us on a letter to leadership urging final appropriations package to fund the government beyond November 21, including House language that blocks the federal government from finalizing the rollback of the EPA’s Mercury and Air Toxics Standard (MATS) proposal.

These regulations have been implemented by the power sector and have protected children and communities from mercury, lead, arsenic and other air toxics from power plants for the last seven years. Furthermore, the Administration’s proposal to jeopardize the Mercury standards is not even supported by the power industry. Having already spent billions to comply, major power sector and labor groups have asked that the standards be left in place and that EPA not move forward with its proposal to undermine them.

Finalized in 2012, the EPA recognized the significant public health benefits of MATS. Then, the EPA estimated that MATS would yield up to $90 billion in public health benefits each year. Now, MATS is fully implemented and has shown to be life-saving, preventing more than 11,000 premature deaths every year and 130,000 asthma attacks each year. Pregnant women and children are especially vulnerable when they are exposed to heavy metals which impact the central nervous system with potentially devastating effects on development.

Of further concern, the Administration failed to consult tribal communities about the rule, claiming that the proposal “does not have tribal implications” and “would neither impose substantial direct compliance costs on tribal governments, nor preempt Tribal law.” Emissions of mercury and other air toxics disproportionately harm certain Native American tribes where fishing is a vital part of tribal culture and where tribal members traditionally consume fish at higher rates than the general population.

Bottom line: these pollutants are a known public health risk to millions of people. We cannot abandon a policy that has been proven to work and save lives. If you would like to join us in this effort, please contact Jennifer Cash (jennifer.cash@mail.house.gov, x59205) in Rep. Schrier's office.

Sincerely,

KIM SCHRIER, M.D.                         KATHY CASTOR                              JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress                         Member of Congress                         Member of Congress

Letter text:
Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Chairwoman Lowey, and Chairman Shelby:
Cc: Minority Leader McCarthy, Minority Leader Schumer, Ranking Member Granger, Vice Chairman Leahy:
As you work to negotiate a final appropriations package to fund the government beyond November 21, 2019, we urge you to retain House language that blocks the federal government from finalizing the rollback of the EPA’s Mercury and Air Toxics Standard (MATS) proposal.

Recently, the House voted to pass an amendment, by bipartisan vote, HR454, that prohibits the use of funds to be used for reducing the EPA Mercury and Air Toxics Standard (MATS). These regulations have been implemented by the power sector and have protected children and communities from mercury, lead, arsenic and other air toxics from power plants for the last seven years. Furthermore, the Administration’s proposal to jeopardize the Mercury standards is not even supported by the power industry. Having already spent billions to comply, major power sector and labor groups have asked that the standards be left in place and that EPA not move forward with its proposal to undermine them.

October is Children’s Health month. We should be celebrating advances that protect our children’s health. Instead, this proposal puts our children’s health at risk. Mercury poses severe public health threats and affects the nervous system, cardiovascular system, and immune function. Fetuses and young children are especially vulnerable. Mercury is harmful
to the developing brain, causing degeneration, impairing growth in ways that interfere with learning and thinking. Infants and children are at the highest risk because the developing central nervous system is particularly sensitive to methylmercury, the form of mercury we get from eating fish, the largest source of exposure. Fetuses are also at high risk as pregnant women can pass mercury through their placenta into the brains of their developing babies. When a woman is pregnant, the mercury in her blood can harm her baby, even if it does not cause her any immediate health problems.

We are deeply concerned by the potential public health risks of weakening the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards. We are no less concerned by the blatant disregard that this Administration has shown toward Native Americans in the rulemaking process. When putting forward this proposal, this Administration failed to consult tribal communities about the rule, claiming that the proposal “does not have tribal implications” and “would neither impose substantial direct compliance costs on tribal governments, nor preempt Tribal law.” Emissions of mercury and other air toxics disproportionately harm certain Native American tribes where fishing is a vital part of tribal culture and where tribal members traditionally consume fish at higher rates than the general population.

MATS has been highly effective in reducing levels of mercury and other hazardous air pollutants, like arsenic, lead, chromium and acid gas, into the atmosphere and is responsible for cutting mercury emissions from power plants by 86% compared to a decade ago. The reduction in mercury emissions has resulted in significant public health benefits and EPA has estimated that the emissions resulting from MATS yields up to $90 billion in benefits each year. Now, EPA proposes to ignore these significant public health benefits because they include the “co-benefits” of reducing HAP emissions in addition to mercury. Instead, EPA’s proposal would consider only the “direct benefits” of regulating mercury pollution from power plants, which would yield up to $6 million each year.

This issue remains of significant importance. EPA’s proposal threatens the health and safety of our babies and children, and is an especially egregious move by this administration. We urge you to include in any final negotiated package the language adopted with bipartisan support on the House floor during consideration of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies during conference.

Sincerely,