



To: Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
From: Jennifer Hadayia, Executive Director at Air Alliance Houston
Date: June 22, 2022

Subject: Public comments at the Sunset Review public hearing on the TCEQ

For the record, my name is Jennifer Hadayia, and I am the Executive Director of Air Alliance Houston. We are a nonprofit advocacy organization that has worked for over 30 years to reduce the public health impacts of air pollution in the Greater Houston Area. I was born and raised in Houston, my family worked for generations at the Houston Ship Channel. I deeply love Houston and its people and that's why I'm committed to the Air Alliance Houston mission.

Unfortunately, one of the greatest challenges to our mission is the very state agency tasked with protecting us.

Where we take steps to oppose more polluters in the same communities in Houston, TCEQ routinely approves them. From reading the TCEQ director's own responses to our permit oppositions, a complete permit application is the primary basis for permit approval. I cannot think of a time when a history of excess emissions, fines, violations, or even large-scale disasters has prevented approval of an air permit in the Houston area.

Where we consider the disproportionate impacts of air pollution on people of color, TCEQ claims to not consider race or ethnicity in its decision making. The way this plays out in practice is that TCEQ gives no consideration to the historical and cumulative impact of air pollution on people of color and continues to approve multiple polluters right in their backyards. For those unclear, that is environmental racism.

The staff report before you affirmed several similar areas of improvement. But, there are two concerning gaps:

- #1, TCEQ Should Apply Environmental Justice Principles As A Basis For Permitting.

In line with its mission to protect public health, TCEQ should take the needs of impacted communities into consideration at every step of permit decision making, which leads me to my second point:

- TCEQ's Policies and Processes Should Include Meaningful Public Input.

This means the opportunity by those directly impacted by TCEQ's decisions to have influence over those decisions. The lived experiences, views, input, and needs of community members should hold equal weight to the permit applicant. This is not merely the opportunity to provide

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information and comment, as the staff report states, but for that information and comment to have true influence over the decision.

In closing, regulations are actions by public agencies to protect the public from harm, but only if the public is prioritized. The staff report called the TCEQ “reluctant regulators.” We agree, and Houstonians are literally sick from the TCEQ being reluctant to protect their health over the interests of industry.

Air Alliance Houston will continue to work for 30 more years alongside our community members and partners to address air pollution. But this responsibility shouldn't be ours alone. I hope you make recommendations that result in meaningful and impactful change to this agency in the best interests of public and environmental health. Thank you.

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