



April 26, 2021

Texas House Committee on Environmental Regulations
Room E1.026
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Honorable Members of the Environmental Regulation Committee,

My name is Corey Williams and I am the Policy and Research Director at Air Alliance Houston. Air Alliance Houston believes that everyone has a right to breathe clean air and where you live should not determine your health.

I'm writing today in support of HB 2974. HB 2974 is a reasonable proposal that seeks to provide a minimal degree of liability and recompense for the negative externalities associated with polluting industries while taking steps to protect the most vulnerable among us. It is a common-sense bill that should pass with minimal controversy among conscientious stakeholders that value the health and safety of our state's greatest asset – our children.

The American Lung Association has found that children are particularly vulnerable to adverse air quality owing to their increased respiratory rate and developing lung capacity¹. When children attend Texas public schools, the responsibility for protecting the health and safety of students is incumbent upon the school staff, the district leadership, and, ultimately, the State of Texas.

In Texas, there are over 5,000 public schools within two-miles of facilities registered with the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory program – a program that tracks the storage and release of certain toxic industrial pollutants². Over three-million students are estimated to be enrolled in these schools, accounting for about 60% of total enrollment throughout the state³.

Major industrial pollution events occur far too often in our state, particularly among our coastal communities that are located in close proximity to refineries and petrochemical facilities. Recent disasters such as the ITC fire in East Harris County, the TPC explosion in Port Neches, and the KMCO explosion in Crosby are among the most recent reminders of this fact,

¹ *Children and Air Pollution*. American Lung Association, 15 Oct. 2020, www.lung.org/clean-air/outdoors/who-is-at-risk/children-and-air-pollution.

² "TRI Data and Tools." *EPA*, Environmental Protection Agency, 6 Apr. 2021, www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program/tri-data-and-tools.

³ Texas Education Agency. "School Data." *TEA*, Texas Education Agency, 9 Oct. 2019, tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-data.

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but events similar to these have occurred too many times in the past to comprehensively list here. Texas communities are too frequently burdened with the threat of explosions and chemical releases associated with their industrial neighbors, and there has thus far been very little accountability for the negative externalities imposed by these events on affected communities.

Among these communities, the potential for a shelter-in-place scenario – or even an evacuation – as a result of a chemical emergency is a very real possibility. At the very least, the children of these communities are owed the promise of clean indoor air in the schools in which they spend the greater part of their day and where they may be forced to take shelter during the next chemical disaster.

HB 2974 is a common-sense bill that seeks to protect the children of our state that are vulnerable to chemical disasters from the intrusion of industrial hazards in their lives. It only asks that industry take a minimal role in acknowledging their responsibility to the health and safety of local communities in which they operate, and it is our hope that it will move through this committee and pass with the overwhelming bipartisan support of the Texas legislature.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Corey Williams
Policy and Research Director
Air Alliance Houston

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