

Comments at January 5, 2022 Allegheny County Board of Health Meeting

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Angelo Taranto and I am member of Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN). I am here to address our concerns about how the Health Department is treating ACCAN and other grassroots organizations who advocate for better air quality.

ACCAN's focus in recent years has been Metalico on Neville Island. Since 2018 we have documented over 350 pollution events in our blog at accancamera.com. We have submitted complaints to the Health Department for most of these pollution events. We haven't done this to raise grant funds or because we are extremists. We have done this to bring attention to the harmful air pollution that we and many in our community have to breath.

2021 brought an unwelcome change in the way ACCAN and other grassroots organizations are treated by the Health Department. While we respect the work that air quality staff do, the department treats us as though we are extremists whose complaints and questions don't have to be taken seriously.

We used to be treated more as a partner and had opportunities to ask questions in meetings or through emails. We now don't get any response to our requests for meetings with air quality staff, so there is no opportunity for dialogue. We are told that the only way air quality staff will respond is through the GovQA system, if we submit a complaint. When we have submitted questions through emails or letters, we either don't get responses or the responses we get don't address our concerns. As an example, we asked what changes Metalico was required to make after the April 14th fire, so that the community could be assured that a fire of that type would not happen again. The Health Department has not given the community any assurances at all, so we have to assume that Metalico is being allowed to operate as they always have, with no concern for the harm they are doing to the community.

As residents of Allegheny County who are working to try to get regulators to protect our community from toxic air pollution, we need and deserve a meeting with air quality staff to discuss our concerns and have our questions answered.

Please provide a written response to these comments. Thank you.

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