

Good afternoon. My name is Jay Ting Walker and I am a Community Organizer with Clean Air Council, a non-profit environmental health organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, PA. The Council has been working to protect everyone's right to breathe clean air for over 50 years. The Council has approximately 35,000 members, including many in Allegheny County.

Air emissions from the Clairton Coke Works are the third largest driver of cancer risk in the area. The Clairton Coke Works (in Clairton) is located in a community of color. Meaningful, lasting reductions in harmful air pollution from coke plants can only be achieved through requirements for changes in technology and operations. The current way that coke ovens are regulated, by allowing a certain percentage of leaking equipment and allowable seconds of visible emissions, is insufficient to protect public health. The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) must do much more to adequately address the environmental injustices resulting from allowing preventable air pollution that burdens the health of nearby residents.

The ACHD has taken steps in the right direction in its decision to development of new coke oven regulations. The draft presented in 2018 contained some good suggestions. However, the draft regulations ACHD proposed in 2020, although better than nothing, were weaker than the 2018 regulations. The ACHD should use the legal challenge from US Steel as an opportunity to draft a stronger proposal that more effectively reduces harmful air pollution. ACHD should include the provisions in the 2018 draft proposals that reduce the amount of leaking allowed from coke ovens. The ACHD should also incorporate into its regulations technologies and practices required at coke oven facilities in Europe and Japan.

I urge you to use your key role as overseers of the Allegheny County Health Department to advise the Allegheny County Health Department and its Director Dr. Debra Bogen to develop and propose a health-protective coke oven regulation that incorporates the latest research on health risks and the latest advancements in technologies and practices to reduce harmful air pollution from coke oven facilities. This should include enhancing a required work practice plan that was prepared in the early 1990s that doesn't seem to be in use today. Ultimately, facilities need to be expected to comply with air quality regulation that protects the health of Allegheny County residents or cease operating.

Lastly, I would urge the Board of Health to review the December articles from Oliver Morrison in Public Source and Reid Frazier in Allegheny Front about the Clairton Coke Works fire. Those articles and the deposition testimony they include make it very clear that US Steel is not to be trusted.

And I quote "testimony from Jim Kelly, former deputy director of environmental health at the Allegheny County Health Department, about the plant's condition. In a 2020 deposition, Kelly said that he toured the facility in 2017 and found it "one of the most decrepit facilities I've ever seen in my nearly 30 years of work."