

American Lung Association: Public health groups voice opposition to air quality reduction bills

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Contact: Dona Wininsky, dona.wininsky@lung.org, 262-703-4840

Brookfield, WI — A coalition of public health groups led by the American Lung Association in Wisconsin have voiced their opposition to legislation that would roll back state air laws that protect local communities from the negative health impacts of toxic pollutants.

“Senate Bills 457, 459, 463 and 466 and Assembly Bills 555, 558, 587, and 588 will collectively reduce air quality and increase the potential for negative health impacts in Wisconsin,” the coalition stated in a letter to members of the legislature. “We are writing to ask you to oppose these proposals.”

One of the bills would repeal all state-level air pollutant limits, which protect the public from hazardous air emissions not covered by the federal government, often from smaller businesses that operate in local communities. An estimated two-thirds of all sources emitting dangerous air pollutants are covered only by state laws.

“This proposal will likely impact public health in the neighborhoods of facilities using these chemicals, with children, the elderly and those with existing respiratory problems at the greatest risk,” said the groups in the letter. “Under these proposals, we could see an increase in the number of days children will be at risk for asthma attacks and emergency department visits.”

The coalition is made up of many large, state-wide public health organizations,

including Gundersen Medical System, the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition, the Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Society for Respiratory Care, Wisconsin Allergy Society, the Wisconsin Environmental Health Network, the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards, and the Wisconsin Public Health Association.

“Air quality trends in Wisconsin have been improving in recent years. We should not reverse the progress we have made by increasing human exposure to toxic air pollutants.”