

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2019

Dr. Patrick Breysse
Director
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
4770 Buford Highway NE
Atlanta, GA 30341

Dear Director Breysse:

Thank you for your service to our nation as director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). We write to you out of concern for communities in our districts and across the country that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) predicts were exposed to unacceptable levels of ethylene oxide (EtO) emissions, and we call on you to immediately initiate a nationwide exposure study to determine the extent to which Americans are actually subject to elevated levels of this carcinogen.

It is now more than two full years since the EPA completed its December 2016 review of decades of research and issued an updated Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) assessment for EtO. At that time, EPA declared EtO to be a known carcinogen with an inhalation cancer risk 30 times greater than the previous estimate. That 2016 cancer risk estimate for EtO was then used by EPA in its most recent National Air Toxics Assessment, which used emissions and meteorological data to identify communities around the country, including several in our districts, that are predicted to face unacceptable cancer risk.

We know from the National Air Toxics Assessment that there are multiple areas around the country with unacceptably high predicted cancer risk due to EtO emissions. We therefore ask that ATSDR work in a transparent and publicly accountable manner with EPA to immediately conduct a nationwide study of EtO exposure in communities with elevated levels of EtO emissions, as well as communities known to have been exposed to high levels of EtO emissions in the past. We ask that this assessment include those communities in Lake County, IL, which have already been identified as being high risk due to high levels of EtO, but were shown as having low risk in the National Air Toxics Assessment due to a clerical error. Such a study would provide the public with valuable information and would advance our understanding of the links between ethylene oxide exposure and cancer. We also urge ATSDR to engage with and keep the public fully informed throughout this process.

We also applaud moves by local and state agencies to conduct cancer incidence studies around EtO-emitting facilities, such as the one the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is carrying out in the communities surrounding the Sterigenics facility in Willowbrook, IL. We believe that this type of study will provide essential insight into the actual burden of EtO exposure on that community. We ask that ATSDR serve as a resource for IDPH and any other state or local agencies nationwide that opt to conduct such a study relating to EtO.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these requests. These communities deserve a full and comprehensive analysis of the potential impact EtO emissions have had in their area. We appreciate the important role ATSDR has played in this process.

Sincerely,



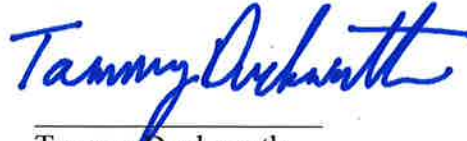
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Member of Congress



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