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February 18th, 2021
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Testimony in Support of HB 5419: An Act Concerning the Federal Clean Air Act Fee on Motor Vehicle Registrations

My name is Rahul Shah. I am a New Haven resident who has completed my pediatric residency training at Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital, and am currently a pediatric emergency medicine fellow at Connecticut Children's. Please note that the opinions expressed below are that of my own and may not represent that of my employer or medical system.

I am writing in support of HB 5419: An Act Concerning the Federal Clean Air Act Fee on Motor Vehicle Registrations

I recall evaluating a school-age boy with a known history of asthma. He came to the emergency department due to difficulty breathing. On my initial evaluation, it was apparent that he was very sick; he was barely able to speak complete words and appeared extremely tired. I could see his ribs with each of his struggling breaths – a sign of significant distress. He required critical care – including multiple doses of inhaled medications, a powerful intravenous steroid, and several other interventions, all before being admitted to the hospital for ongoing management. His parents were understandably alarmed, though, they had experienced similar events in the past.

As someone who has routinely managed asthma exacerbations in several of Connecticut's cities, I can personally attest to the significant role socioeconomic status has for children afflicted with this disease. Poor air quality is a known link between urban centers and lung diseases, such as asthma.^{i,ii}

A recent study modeled how the improvement in air quality from COVID-19 restrictions in New York City offered benefits to childhood health. The findings suggested thousands of forgone emergency department visits and hospitalizations, and up to \$77 billion in healthcare-related savings over a five-year period.ⁱⁱⁱ Imposing current restrictions may not be socially or economically practical for years into the future, but this study gives as an opportunity to learn how improved air quality can dramatically improve childhood health. HB 5419 would bolster efforts to improve clean forms of transportation thereby improving air quality.

I encourage you to vote in support of HB 5419. I would be more than happy to further discuss this issue with you; please email me at rahuldshah357@gmail.com if that would be helpful. I hope you take this opportunity to improve the lives of children in Connecticut.

Respectfully,



Rahul Shah, MD

ⁱ Morello-Frosch, R., Zuk, M., Jerrett, M., Shamasunder, B., Kyle, A.D., 2011. Understanding the cumulative impacts of inequalities in environmental health: implications for policy. *Health Aff. (Millwood)* 30 (5), 879–887. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0153>.

ⁱⁱ Gochfeld, M., Burger, J., 2011. Disproportionate exposures in environmental justice and other populations: the importance of outliers. *Am. J. Publ. Health* 101 (Suppl 1), S53–S63. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2011.300121>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Perera, F., Berberian, A., Cooley, D., Shenaut, E., Olmstead, E., Ross, Z., and Matte, T. "Potential Health Benefits of Sustained Air Quality Improvements in New York City: A Simulation Based on Air Pollution Levels during the COVID-19 Shutdown." *Environmental Research*. 193 (2021): 110555. Web.