

**Testimony
EPA's Proposed Rule
"Standards of Performance for
Greenhouse Gas Emissions from New
Stationary Sources: Electric Utility
Generating Units"
Docket Number EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0495**

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On behalf of

Adrian Shelley, Executive Director
Air Alliance Houston

February 6, 2014 Public Hearing
Washington, D.C.

Good morning. My name is Lucía Oliva Hennelly. I work with Environmental Defense Fund, a non-partisan environmental organization with more than 750,000 members nationwide.

I am here today as a member of the diverse Latino community in the United States, to support EPA in regulating carbon pollution from new power plants **with the strongest possible rules**. Carbon pollution has disproportionate negative impacts on our Latino communities, and as the fastest-growing population in this country, **Latino voices on this issue must be heard**.

I am delivering comments on behalf of someone who could not be here today, Adrian Shelley, Executive Director with our partner organization, Air Alliance Houston, **because carbon pollution impacts Latino communities everywhere, not just in Washington**.

As the Houston region's leading air quality and public health nonprofit, we at Air Alliance Houston are mindful of the effects that carbon pollution has on our local communities.

For two years running, Harris County has been the fastest growing county in the nation, and Houston is *the* most diverse major city in America. It is a majority-minority city, and **more than a third of its residents are Latino**.

Harris County is also ground zero for the environmental justice movement. Although everyone in Harris County could suffer from the effects of climate change, **we can expect our low-income communities of color, including many Latinos, to suffer disproportionately.** There are several reasons for this.

First, **these communities are in the most vulnerable locations.** Many of our environmental justice communities are on Houston's East End and along the Houston Ship Channel. These communities are on the front lines of any potential sea level rise or major hurricanes, both exacerbated by climate change. The primary cause of climate change is carbon pollution, and the primary source of carbon pollution is fossil-fuel fired power plants. This is what makes the proposed standards we are discussing today so important. When they are finalized, **they will put the first-ever national limits on the amount of carbon pollution that power plants can emit. That's a major step toward protecting our communities from the damage caused by climate change.** In Houston, these are communities that are surrounded by our city's petrochemical industry: refineries, chemical plants, tank farms, and the like. **Some estimates have suggested that 1,400 tanks in Houston are at serious risk should a 25 foot storm surge occur. Those tanks threaten our most vulnerable residents. It should also be noted that these are lower-income residents, including many Latinos, who are less likely to have flood insurance.**

Second, the public health impacts of climate change will disproportionately impact our environmental justice communities. Climate change will lead to such adverse effects as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, heat, and drought. Many of these impacts will weigh more heavily on Houston's vulnerable populations. Climate change, exacerbated by carbon pollution, will also lead to an exacerbation of ambient air pollution, particularly ozone. Our environmental justice communities already suffer worse air quality than most of Houston and, under the threat of climate change, they can expect to suffer more, as some of my colleagues have shared with you today.

Third, the health of environmental justice communities is already compromised. Our surveys of Houston Ship Channel residents show that they suffer more health problems than the rest of Texas. **Fully 27% suffer from asthma or another respiratory disease, compared to 12.7% of Texans at large. Similarly, 5.6% of Ship Channel residents report having cancer, as compared to 3.7% of Texans. Texas also has the most uninsured residents of any state in the nation. Our surveys indicate that 51% of Ship Channel residents do not have healthcare coverage.**

Houston has been called “the energy capitol of the world.” At Air Alliance Houston, we do not believe we are accurately measuring the true cost of the energy we produce. It can be measured in billions of dollars of corporate profit, **or it can be measured in years and lives lost within our vulnerable populations.** **We refuse to weigh dollars against lives, and we are unsympathetic to claims that bringing our nation’s carbon emissions under control is not economically feasible.**

For more than a century, Houston has been home to great technical advances in the energy economy. We have great faith in our business community. It has risen to challenges in the past and it will do so again. We call on the EPA to regulate carbon pollution from new power plants with the strongest possible rules, and on the business community to embrace regulations that will lead us all into the clean, healthy energy economy of the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact us if you have questions or wish to discuss these matters further.

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