

August 23, 2022
Detroit, Michigan

Hello and Thank you Chairman Khanna, my Representative Tlaib, and the Members of the Committee on the Oversight and Reform. My name is Daeya Redding. I'm Pam's daughter. I was born and raised in Detroit and I currently work to increase the environmental health and biodiversity in our neighborhood. I'm also a lifetime sufferer of asthma.

Try to envision this, you wake up in the morning and start your day as usual. You are brewing a cup of coffee, making your favorite breakfast dish, getting ready to walk your dog, or simply stepping outside for fresh air. Suddenly, the air isn't as fresh as you were expecting. It's rotten, metallic, and fishy. It's blatantly unhealthy and not of the crisp and clean perfume that mother nature emits. Well, that's my reality.

I was working this past Friday at Arboretum Detroit, located a mile east of US Ecology and the air started to stink. We were working with volunteers from outside the neighborhood who were unfamiliar with industrial air pollution. We reported the foul odor to a State of Michigan EGLE representative. But, we had to continue to work through the smell, exposing ourselves and our volunteers. US Ecology will likely get a violation, pay a nominal fee, and continue to operate as they do.

Our community here is very protective of our clean air. We value the oxygen that our earth gives us to stay alive. We know that anytime a facility is emitting odors beyond its borders of operation and into the communities around it, it is an illegal act. We know how to call on EGLE to report these odors, which helped us stop the Detroit incinerator from polluting us; yet EGLE's numerous violations and consent orders on US Ecology and the Detroit Incinerator have not stopped these facilities from fixing their odor problem.

The incinerator received over 800 violations of the Clean Air Act and continued to operate as usual. US Ecology has received over 25 violations, a consent order, and a pause on permit renewal; yet they continue to operate with odor problems almost weekly. In order for them to operate, they have to pollute us, and there is no government agency that will use their power to stop them. The current policies, laws, and regulations of these polluting industries allow them to pay to pollute and continue to operate while harming us.

We want polluting industries to stop all operations if they cannot fix their pollution issues, as we are paying for their pollution with our lives, our children's lives, our bodies and our futures. EGLE and the EPA allow this to happen since they are not doing enough to fine or enforce industries to fix their operations.

We want good neighbors in our community and when a neighbor is stinking up our neighborhood with odors that smell like a mixed batch of rotting fish and permanent marker, it is a major concern. When we have to stop working outside in our gardens and close our windows on hot summer days to keep this foul odor out of our homes, it is a major concern. When a

hazardous waste facility processes hazardous waste that emits odors and causes dust tracks throughout our community that can increase our cancer risk, inflame asthma, and cause's reproductive health problems in our community, it is a major concern.

For decades, Detroiters have fought against corporate polluters who have profited off using our neighborhoods as their dumping grounds. US Ecology has consistently been among the worst of these polluters. US Ecology is under a consent decree with Michigan's EGLE. They are not supposed to release any odors. But, US Ecology has had 26 violations since 2014.

Odors are not just bad smells. Odors are often volatile organic compounds or VOCs. VOCs can have a range of bad health effects from lung irritation to cancer. In addition to odors, residents are affected by the dust and particulate matter from the facility. Particulate matter is so tiny it can get lodged in lungs, air passageways, and even the bloodstream. It is the major cause of premature death due to air pollution. Exposure to particulate matter can cause lung irritation, difficulty breathing, asthma attacks, decreased lung function, heart attacks, and premature births and low birth weight. They continue to operate while illegally releasing odors into our community. These facilities should be required to shut down until their odor and emission issues are fixed.

It was this pollution that made our community more susceptible to COVID-19. Areas of increased air pollution had higher death rates during the 1918 flu pandemic and the 2003 SARS outbreak. The same thing happened when COVID hit. Community members already suffering from asthma and respiratory illness were hit the hardest.

The State of Michigan does not consider cumulative health impacts on residents when citing polluting facilities. In this neighborhood, residents still have the pollution of the incinerator in our lungs and in our bodies as well as pollution from two freeways, US Ecology, and other area facilities.

EGLE is limited in its ability to establish the necessary regulations to protect residents, we sought another avenue to get Justice through establishing a Host Community Agreement (HCA) between the City of Detroit and US Ecology Detroit South and failed to get one because the facility is not legally obligated to do so.

We have urged EGLE, the EPA, and our City Council to demand better operating procedures within our community and stop the odor violations. We received support from State Senator Chang, State Representative Aiyash, and Congresswoman Tlaib to establish a Host Community Agreement; to work directly with the facility and the residents and work on solutions together. Yet because there is no legal obligation for a Host Community Agreement we have fallen on deaf ears and our odor issues and health concerns continue for another generation. Our federal, state, city, and county regulations fall short of protecting our health. This problem should not rest solely on the residents harmed, we need stronger regulations to protect communities like ours.

The state continues to issue odor violations and consent orders, yet US Ecology is set to receive a permit renewal by the end of September because EGLE is afraid of lawsuits if they deny the facility its permit to operate based on community concerns and odor violations. We have no real protections in place for our health and wellbeing, this type of operating procedure needs to stop. The odor issues and health concerns continue in our community and we have exhausted all our options to pursue justice. The laws regulating environmental agencies need to be strengthened to protect our communities, not industry profits.

Our infrastructure fails our communities as well. These facilities bring trucks into our community and tear up our streets. It is a danger to our community to have hazardous waste trucks full of liquid running over 5 ft potholes. These roads should be first to be repaired to prevent serious environmental disasters. US Ecology also disposes of its liquid waste into our sewer system and our pipes are in need of immediate repair. The odors from the discharge travel into our homes through the open sewer lines and seep into our groundwater and soil through cracked pipes. Infrastructure renewal should be prioritized in communities like mine. Continued use of bad infrastructure and lack of regulations poses a great concern to our health and environment.

US Ecology Detroit South is a hazardous waste storage and treatment site located at 1923 Frederick St. Detroit, Michigan. The facility was bought by US Ecology in 2014 and received 26 violation notices from the MI Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) between 2014 and November 2021. Ownership of the facility was recently transferred to Republic Services who acquired the entire US Ecology company in May 2022.

US Ecology has received violations from the state for repeatedly releasing noxious odors into the neighborhood and has proven incapable of operating this facility in a way that protects the health and welfare of the residents who live near it.

It is clear that our community deserves a greater level of accountability from US Ecology for its continued failure to adequately address its history of odor violations. While EGLE is limited in its ability to establish the necessary regulations to protect residents, we explored another avenue to get justice through establishing a Host Community Agreement between the city of Detroit and US Ecology Detroit South.

More on US Ecology and our work toward a Host Community Agreement:

We have gathered hundreds of signatures in support of a host community agreement between the City and US Ecology Detroit South. A Host Community Agreement (HCA) is a legal agreement between the city of Detroit and a polluting facility that establishes community-specific guidelines and regulations tailored to the community's needs. Since the 1990s, HCAs have been used effectively to uplift the voices of impacted communities throughout Wayne County. The concessions that can be included in these agreements are specific to the problems at the facility and can go beyond what EGLE is authorized to regulate in state law. Yet

we were met with the lack of legal requirements for hazardous waste facilities and were not able to establish a HCA yet with this facility.

Currently, US Ecology Detroit South is in the process of applying for a permit renewal through EGLE to continue operating their facility. It is expected that US Ecology will have its permit renewed by EGLE in December 2022. Thousands of people live within a mile of the waste facility. Many of them close their windows, stay inside and adjust their schedules due to the noxious odors that come from the facility. The waste facility has been issued many violation notices for noxious odors since 2014. The odor is known to have a negative effect on the health of people with asthma and other chronic conditions.

"The people who live, work and play around US Ecology deserve an environment free of hazardous and toxic substances that pollute their air. Public health and wellbeing of the community should always take precedence." Rep. Aiyash said. "Establishing an HCA with the facility takes us one step closer to that goal."

"A formal agreement is the best way to ensure that industries like US Ecology South will be transparent and accountable to the community," said Rev. Sharon Buttry, a Hamtramck resident and volunteer facilitator for the Detroit Hamtramck Coalition for Advancing Healthy Environments. "As a Coalition we will not rest until US Ecology South stops threatening our health and well being."

"Our children, like all children, deserve and demand fresh air to play, learn and grow in," says Carolyn Leadley, a Detroit resident whose family lives near the facility. "Noxious smells from the US Ecology Detroit South plant hinder our family's enjoyment of our neighborhood and our own backyard, and pose potential health risks to growing children."

"Everyone should have the right to clean air to breathe and a good quality of life, no matter where they live. Facilities who continue to violate environmental standards need to be held accountable and a Host Community Agreement would be a tremendous way to ensure residents' voices and needs are heard," said Sen. Stephanie Chang. "I applaud the Detroit Hamtramck Coalition for Advancing Healthy Environments and residents living near the US Ecology South facility. Their tireless engagement and activism will no doubt bring the changes and accountability needed."

Thank you for allowing me time to speak today and share me and my community's reality. I want to end with a quote: *"Humanitarianism consists in never sacrificing a human being to a purpose."* - Albert Schweitzer

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