



# Allegheny County Council

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## Legislation Text

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Motion of the Council of Allegheny County endorsing recent enforcement actions undertaken by the Allegheny County Health Department intended to foster compliance with existing air quality regulations for the good of public health, consistent with the Department's mandate to oversee the reduction or outright elimination of risks to air quality.

**WHEREAS**, according to the American Lung Association's (ALA) most recent "State of the Air" report, Allegheny County received failing scores for the organization's assessments of daily and annual particle pollution, as well as for high ozone days. The ALA estimates that the health of more than 1.2 million Allegheny County residents is put at risk, with 20,000 and 100,000 children and adults, respectively, living with asthma joining the more than 65,000 residents living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and more than 100,000 living with cardiovascular disease as populations put at additional risk; and

**WHEREAS**, both U.S. Steel's Edgar Thomson Plant and Clairton Coke Works have been recurrent sources of large-scale pollution production in Allegheny County, severely impacting the air quality for those who live and breathe in our region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) is charged with the protection, promotion, and preservation of the health and well-being of all residents of Allegheny County residents, with a particular emphasis focused on the most vulnerable among us; and

**WHEREAS**, the 1963 Clean Air Act notes "that the growth in the amount and complexity of air pollution brought about by urbanization, industrial development, and the increasing use of motor vehicles, has resulted in mounting dangers to the public health and welfare, including injury to agricultural crops and livestock, damage to and the deterioration of property, and hazards to air and ground transportation," and that the reduction or outright elimination of sources of air pollution, as well as general air pollution control, is a prime responsibility of state and local governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Council is encouraged by the efforts within other legislative bodies to meaningfully engage in protecting air quality within the Commonwealth both through penalty imposition and community notification, as typified by proposals such as HB 1752; and

**WHEREAS**, the ACHD is charged with maintaining the standards of the Clean Air Act, as well as the 1955 Air Pollution Control Act;

**WHEREAS**, in recognition of the enshrined rights of Pennsylvanians to clean air and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic values of the environment, the ACHD is empowered and entrusted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to take the necessary and appropriate steps to shield Allegheny County residents from air pollution and contamination, pursuant to the constitutional obligation that the Commonwealth carries to safeguard its natural resources for the benefit of all of its residents; and

**WHEREAS**, it is indicated in the declaration of policy and purpose of the ACHD's rules and regulations

regarding air pollution control that prevention of pollution is recognized and established as the preferred method over pollution control for the preservation of public health; and

*WHEREAS*, beyond those methods, the ACHD must implement pollution control measures, the first two priorities enumerated are the protection of Allegheny County residents' collective health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Allegheny County, and the maintenance of those ambient air quality standards required by ACHD regulations; and

*WHEREAS*, this Council unequivocally holds that the County's residents are entitled to the right to a clean and healthy environment that's as minimally blemished by pollutants and toxins as feasibly possible, just as all people are; and

*WHEREAS*, this Council holds that the proposition that the advancement and improvement of economic growth and environmental health are at odds is a false dichotomy, and this Council firmly and resolutely believes the proper governmental bodies must advance solutions to the benefit of all residents and workers involved because those parties are one and the same; and

*WHEREAS*, it's the role and place of any government dedicated to the service and protection of the people to offer the protections made necessary by the pursuit of environmental and economic justice and equity;

## **NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED THAT THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY**

Makes explicitly clear its backing of the Allegheny County Health Department's health-based air quality regulatory actions that aim to bring U.S. Steel's Edgar Thomson Plant and Clairton Coke Works facilities into compliance for the good of public health, as well as its mandate to oversee the reduction or outright elimination of risks to air quality.

## **IT IS FURTHER MOVED THAT**

This Council hereby commits itself to supporting its residents in their fight for cleaner, healthier, and more breathable air.