

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 4, 2019

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

Dear Director Breyse:

We write to request that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conduct an updated site-specific Health Consultation for Willowbrook, Illinois using data available from federal, state, or local agencies, based on the most recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ethylene oxide (EtO) ambient air measurements from around the Sterigenics facility. In this effort, we request that ATSDR work in collaboration with the U.S. EPA to perform or continue the necessary air measurements and modeling required for a full cancer risk exposure assessment, to guide specific actions to mitigate exposures to this community, and to make this analysis a priority as soon as the necessary information becomes available.

In August 2018, ATSDR released a Letter Health Consultation entitled “Evaluation of Potential Health Impacts from Ethylene Oxide Emissions,” which relied on U.S. EPA data collection and modeling around the Sterigenics facility in Willowbrook. Based on the concentrations of ambient EtO collected by the EPA from May 16 – 18, 2018, and the updated cancer risk value from the EPA’s Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) “Evaluation of the Inhalation Carcinogenicity of Ethylene Oxide” assessment in late 2016, ATSDR made several recommendations, including that: (1) Sterigenics take immediate action to reduce EtO, (2) U.S. EPA work with Sterigenics to initiate long-term air monitoring, and (3) the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) investigate whether elevated cancers exist in the areas surrounding Sterigenics.

Since that 2018 report, Sterigenics has installed pollution control equipment to reconnect a back vent that was responsible for additional EtO released to the atmosphere. However, over the last few months, the U.S. EPA has taken new measurements which clearly indicate that Sterigenics has still been pumping elevated concentrations of EtO into the Willowbrook community following that change. The most recent data that U.S. EPA released from early January 2019—measurements collected after the back vent has been reconnected to pollution control equipment—include much higher concentrations than were found during May 2018.

Given this concerning new data, we request that an updated site-specific Health Consultation for Sterigenics be prioritized and conducted by ATSDR as soon as possible. Conclusions and recommendations by ATSDR experts are critical components to addressing this public health threat in the Willowbrook community.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



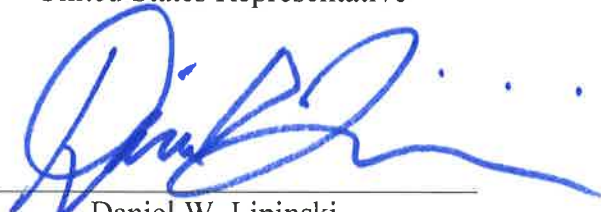
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