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Congress of the United States
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INVESTIGATIONS

March 5, 2019

Regional Administrator Cathy Stepp
Region 5
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Dear Administrator Stepp,

I ran for Congress on a platform that put our environment first, recognizing that our communities deserve clean air, clean and safe drinking water, and solutions to the existential threat that is climate change. These issues are important to me, they are important to my constituents, and I know that they are at the heart of the mission laid out by Congress for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

However, I am increasingly concerned that under this Administration the U.S. EPA is failing to live up to its core mission by choosing to put the interests of polluters ahead of the people both in our region and across the country. From the beginning of President Trump's term, this EPA has prioritized rolling back environmental regulations instead of finding ways to strengthen our protections and combat the real issues facing our planet. Often, this EPA has pursued these rollbacks over loudly voiced concerns from the scientific and environmental communities, all while relying on dubious cost-benefit analysis techniques that undercount real public health and climate benefits that these rules aim to achieve.

According to The New York Times, as of December 2018, the Trump Administration had initiated rollbacks of nearly 80 environmental regulations across multiple agencies, including the U.S. EPA. The rollbacks at EPA have included common-sense regulations such as the fuel-saving CAFE standards on automobiles, the Clean Power Plan that would have resulted in a 36% reduction in climate pollution by 2030, and regulations on dangerous coal ash pollution from power plants – even as a recent study found 250 of 264 of the largest coal plants nationally had leached unacceptable levels of heavy metals and other pollutants into surrounding groundwater.

Unfortunately, this laissez-faire approach to the EPA's core mission has also had a direct impact on my constituents in Illinois' 6th District. After dangerously elevated levels of ethylene oxide emissions were detected at the Sterigenics facility in the Town of Willowbrook, the EPA repeatedly failed to inform citizens of the risks or mount any response that would sufficiently curb the problem. Even before my election to Congress, I was calling for decisive action from the U.S. EPA to address these alarming reports but was consistently met with silence.

Since then, the situation has worsened as new data from both ambient air monitoring conducted by the U.S. EPA and monitoring commissioned by the Town of Willowbrook have shown higher