



*** MEDIA RELEASE ***
Thursday, June 18, 2009

Contact: Leigh Fifelski
517.999.3646
Cell: 248.321.4579

Coalition to Fight Diesel Pollution, Call for Tough Action

Diesel pollution harms Detroit-area kids the most, puts jobs at risk

DETROIT – A new coalition of concerned citizens and organizations, **Alliance for Healthy Air**, today called on the Legislature to crack down on diesel pollution, which threatens public health, puts children at increased risk of diseases such as asthma and even affects jobs.

“Diesel pollution is a silent killer that threatens our families, our children and our quality of life – and that’s why we must take action now,” **Ryan Bodanyi of Clean Water Action** said. “By taking easy common-sense steps, we can significantly cut diesel pollution, and protect our families and the public health. Today, citizens are joining together to call on Lansing to do the right thing and put families first.”

Exposure to diesel pollution can be significantly reduced by retrofitting diesel vehicles with the latest pollution control technology, which can reduce emissions by up to 90 percent. The Alliance for Healthy Air is calling on the Legislature to lead by example and retrofit state-owned and -operated diesel vehicles, so that public vehicles no longer threaten public health. The Alliance for Healthy Air will urge the City of Detroit to retrofit diesel municipal vehicles with currently-available technology, and called on the Legislature to enact anti-idling legislation for diesel vehicles. Over the long term, Michigan should take further action to protect public health and economic growth by reducing diesel emissions by 70% by 2020.

This is an opportunity for the state to lead by example and step up in the fight to protect children and vulnerable people from diseases like asthma,” **Ahmina Maxey of Eastern Michigan Environmental Action Council** said. “Every day of delay only worsens the problem and puts more people at risk. Diesel pollution doesn’t just threaten our lives, it also threatens our jobs – and in today’s tough economy, we need to hang on to every single job. By acting now, we can make a real difference and save lives.”

more

Patricia Ramirez, a Detroit resident whose son is suffering from **asthma**, said: “My son’s disease prevents him – and thousands of others – from doing the things most people take for granted. For many, it is hard just to walk short distances, play with friends and loved ones, and even go to work. We have the ability to prevent these diseases. Retrofitting vehicles with available technology to cut pollution is a step in the right direction. While many of us must live with our disease, we can still act now to make sure that our children are protected from dangerous and potentially deadly diesel pollution.”

Diesel pollution carries staggering economic hazards:

- Diesel pollution causes an estimated 61,000 lost work days in Michigan each year, more than 10,000 asthma attacks, and nearly 500 premature deaths.
- The economic damage impact of these health problems can be staggering – an estimated \$139 billion nationwide.

In Wayne County, the lifetime cancer risk from diesel pollution is 429 times greater than the Environmental Protection Agency’s acceptable cancer level of 1 in 1,000,000. The high particulate levels in Detroit have led to extremely high children’s asthma rates: one in five children in Detroit have asthma, and asthma hospitalizations for children are three times the statewide average. Wayne County’s risk factor is the highest in Michigan and ranks 80 out of 3,109 counties nationally.

The campaign to curb diesel pollution has already attracted support from a wide range of citizen, faith and health groups, including: Clean Water Action; EMEAC (East Michigan Environmental Action Council); Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination; Ecology Center; Hiking Michigan; Interfaith Council on Peace and Justice; Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan; Michigan Citizen Action; Michigan Environmental Council; Michigan Land Use Institute; Michigan League of Conservation Voters; Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit; Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision; and many others.

###