United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 11, 2016

Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We write to urge additional federal actions to reduce harmful air pollution from ports and other congested components of the national transportation system. Across the United States, 13 million people—3.5 million of whom are children—live near major marine ports or rail yards. These low-income and minority communities are disproportionately exposed to high levels of air pollution resulting in serious health problems. Due to this environmental justice concern and the urgent need to transition to cleaner energy sources, we urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to coordinate additional action from the federal government to reduce emissions from ports and the freight network and help alleviate the impact on vulnerable communities.

Our nation's goods movement network is a critical and indispensable driver of our economy. Key nodes in our freight network, such as major seaports near dense urban areas, provide economic benefits that extend throughout the nation. However, the large volumes of air pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides (NOX) and particulate matter (PM) emitted by heavy duty diesel trucks, ocean-going vessels, cargo handling equipment, railroad locomotives, and harbor craft, are heavily concentrated in the communities in the direct vicinity.

Exposure to these pollutants is linked to higher rates of serious health problems including asthma, lung and heart disease, and other respiratory ailments. The impacts, especially on children, result in increased risk for cancer, missed school days, and more hospital visits. For instance, 25.9 million Americans have asthma, including 7.1 million children, resulting in approximately 15 million missed or less productive work days, 14 million missed school days, and billions of dollars in social and economic costs.

Fortunately, there are proven technologies that can allow the port community to reduce and eventually eliminate diesel emissions. In addition to the positive impact on the health of nearby communities, transitioning to low or zero emissions technologies presents a major opportunity to reduce CO2 emissions that are driving climate change and help the United States meet its emissions reduction pledge made at the international negotiations in Paris.

We applaud the EPA for working to address issues in environmental justice communities through the Environmental Justice program, replacing diesel engines through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Ports Initiative, and implementing programs to reduce emissions from stationary sources. However, mobile sources that converge at U.S. ports,

railyards, and transit centers remain a significant and growing problem, in large part because the regulatory framework for ports and freight lag behind other national air quality initiatives.

We encourage the EPA to act before the end of this administration to promote the use of zero emissions transportation technology and to minimize freight emissions plaguing these environmental justice communities. We respectfully request consideration of the following proposed actions:

- Reduce emissions at sea and inland ports, and the freight corridors that serve them, by developing new national standards to limit pollution to a level that is safe for adjacent communities;

- Assist and direct state and local governments to address freight-generated pollution through Clean Air Act state implementation plans to reduce toxic exposure; and

- Engage communities affected by freight pollution in each EPA Region of the country so that they have a greater voice in decisions about appropriate emission reduction goals and the actions necessary to achieve those reductions.

The issue of port air quality is critical to the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable across the United States. We appreciate your prompt attention to our concerns, and look forward to working with you to ensure clean air and a safe environment for all of our nation's communities.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator