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Date: May 22, 2023

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Report: Air Monitors, New Approach to Measuring Toxins Reduce Disproportionate Harm to Black, Brown, Low-Income Communities

Cumulative impact assessments measure total effect of all pollution as people experience it

DETROIT - Environmental justice groups released a report citing solutions to disproportionate health hazards suffered by communities of color and low income communities. Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition, Great Lakes Environmental Law Center, Ecology Center, Just Air and many others issued "[From Air Pollution To Solutions: Collaborative Planning for Clean Air in Detroit and Wayne County.](#)"

Detroit and other Wayne County municipalities suffer from poorer air quality and worse health outcomes, including higher rates of asthma than other Michigan communities, and the report highlights the need for systemic changes to air quality monitoring structures, permitting processes, and enforcement of existing air quality standards. Advocates are calling on elected officials and the Department of Energy, Great Lakes, and the Environment (EGLE) to take action.

"Among the most important findings of the report is that state regulators need to protect our health by measuring pollution based on how people are exposed to it. They need to measure the impacts of all pollution at once," said **Jamesa Johnson-Greer, executive director, Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition**. "Right now EGLE measures the health impacts of one source of pollution at a time without considering the overall effect of several pollution sources at once --say, a steel factory together with diesel engine pollution. But people take in all that pollution at once and that's how we need to measure it, using cumulative impact assessments."

The report comes from a unique planning process that included extensive engagement with communities that have borne the severest impacts of air pollution. Its authors are developing an integrated plan to improve community-based air monitoring, a robust policy agenda for improving air quality in hard-hit communities, and a communications strategy to enlist broad community participation in air quality monitoring and reporting.

Policy recommendations include:

- Requiring EGLE's permitting decisions to use a cumulative impact analysis and racial disparity analysis for a more realistic plan to protect health
- Requiring Health Impact Assessments before the approval of major projects such as the Gordie Howe International Bridge or DTE's Integrated Energy Resource Plan in Southeast Michigan
- Strengthened enforcement of existing air quality standards and the depositing of assessed fines to a fund that directly benefits impacted communities, such as the City of Detroit's Public Health Fund
- Regulation of mobile source pollution, including ordinances against truck idling
- Community-based air quality monitoring with low-cost sensors

[The full report is available here.](#)

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The Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition (MEJC) works to achieve a clean, healthy, and safe environment for Michigan residents most affected by inadequate policies. We build power and unity within our community, so we all can thrive. www.michiganej.org