



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, March 5, 2021

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MI Air MI Health members join letter calling on Congress to assist with zero-emission vehicle transition

Nationwide switch would save 6,300 lives, prevent 93,000 asthma attacks and avoid 416,000 lost workdays by 2050

LANSING – Several national and Michigan health organizations are asking Congress to assist with the transition to zero-emission vehicles, noting the reduction in air pollution as a driving factor.

[In a letter to Congress](#), more than a dozen health groups wrote, “We see the effects of air pollution in the patients and communities we serve. From triggering asthma attacks and worsening symptoms of lung disease to causing heart attacks, transportation pollution has dangerous impacts on health. Air pollution affects everyone’s health, but certain groups are more at risk, including babies and children, pregnant people, seniors, low-income communities and people of color.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic is proof we need leaders at all levels of government who will make health and safety a top priority,” said **Kindra Weid**, RN and coalition coordinator of **MI Air MI Health**. “Moving to zero-emission vehicles will ensure our air and water is clean by reducing dangerous pollution that puts people’s lives at risk.”

In September 2020, the American Lung Association released, “[The Road to Clean Air: Benefits of a Nationwide Transition to Electric Vehicles](#),” which found that a nationwide switch to electric cars, buses and heavy-duty trucks, backed by increasing levels of clean, non-combustion renewable energy, will save 6,300 lives, prevent 93,000 asthma attacks and avoid 416,000 lost workdays in 2050. It would also generate \$72 billion in annual health benefits and \$113 billion in global climate benefits.

“To achieve the health benefits of zero-emission vehicles Congress should invest in incentives to purchase them and the charging infrastructure to support them,” said **Ken Fletcher**, director of advocacy for the **American Lung Association** for Michigan. “We also advocate that equity play a role in these discussions as we know communities located along busy highways and other transportation hubs have the most public health gains to make in this transition.”

Asthma is exacerbated by air pollution and climate change. According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, our state’s asthma rate is higher than the national average, and three to four times higher in Michigan’s most polluted zip codes. Approximately [11% of Michigan adults currently have asthma](#). COVID-19 disproportionately impacts communities hardest hit by air pollution, leading to irreparable damage or death, according to [recent research from Harvard University](#).

The **Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America** was one of the organizations to sign onto the letter. “We are urging Congress to look at zero-emission vehicles and the related fueling infrastructure as a critical part of the solution to our public health crisis,” said **Kathleen Slonager**, RN, AE-C, CCH and executive director of **AAFA – Michigan Chapter**. “When we couple expanded access to healthier mobility options, such as improved public transit, we will really make strides to reduce the pollution in our air that threatens people’s health every day.”

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