

January 5, 2022

Via Zoom Meeting Link

**Remarks for Public Comment**

ACHD Board of Health Meeting  
542 Fourth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear ACHD Board Members and Leadership:

I am Matthew Mehalik, Executive Director of the Breathe Project.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions to Article XXI regarding public notice. We advocate that ACHD should continue to publish meeting notices, permit notices, and other public notices in BOTH print and digital versions of newspapers in addition to posting on ACHD electronic media sites. Elderly, technologically limited, and other vulnerable populations continue to depend upon print media for information about their health and well-being. ACHD should not cut these vulnerable constituencies off by removing notice in print media. ACHD should search for new and creative ways to reach vulnerable county residents in addition to maintaining existing channels. We are not aware of any study conducted by ACHD that suggests removing print publication can be done without taking away information from constituents that depend upon print media. We recommend maintaining the print media requirements in Article XXI and expanding requirements to include electronic channels available to ACHD.

I also want to alert the Board that limiting communication with community members on air matters has emerged as a trend under Dr. Bogen's tenure, especially following the hiring of Patrick Dowd while also operating without a Deputy Director with air quality and public health expertise.

The very first request that the Breathe Project made of Dr. Bogen in May of 2020 was that "Dr. Bogen can improve dialog with community members, especially environmental justice communities, to convey ACHD's commitment to air quality improvement as a top priority."

This dialog has not happened. We have been patient for 20 months while ACHD has responded to a pandemic. ACHD has had the capacity to:

1. Stonewall repeated requests from community groups to meet and be heard about ongoing, acute air pollution events.
2. Implement a difficult to use complaint system that frustrates community residents and acts as a barrier to communication and resolution of air quality concerns.
3. Discontinue longstanding dialog community members have had with ACHD staff and require all such communications to flow only through Patrick Dowd.
4. Cancel direct-dialog bi-monthly meetings among Dr. Bogen and air advocacy organizations and insisting these meetings only happen with Patrick Dowd.

The communications barriers and disrespect to environmental justice communities and advocacy organizations need to end.

We urge the board to hold Dr. Bogen and her staff accountable to having productive dialog with community members and advocacy organizations on air and public health issues and to change these dysfunctional practices.

Sincerely,

Matthew M. Mehalik, Ph.D.