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Allegheny County Health Dept. Fines U.S. Steel Q2 and Q3: Breathe Project Responds

Pittsburgh, Pa., – The Breathe Project raises the following concerns regarding Allegheny County Health Department's (ACHD) decision to fine U.S. Steel \$743,625 in stipulated penalties for Article XXI Air Pollution Control violations and permit violations that occurred at the Clairton Coke Works during the second and third quarters of 2019.

- This fine is further evidence of the well-documented, ongoing problems at the Clairton Coke Works. Residents in Clairton and the Mon Valley are tired of breathing poor-quality air, having their holidays disrupted by dirty air and enduring ongoing violations of national air quality standards.
- In addition to fining U.S. Steel, ACHD, the regulator, should consider a hot idle order. Such an option was on the table in 2018, and U.S. Steel has shown a willingness to hot idle when economic conditions are favorable for doing so.

"Our community deserves more than this," says Melanie Meade, Clairton resident. "Clearly something is wrong. These fines are not stopping U.S. Steel from polluting our community. U.S. Steel has been fined hundreds of thousands of dollars and our community still doesn't have any access to these funds. We need a safe place to go during an emergency and an emergency evacuation plan."

"The most recent fines against U.S. Steel are for the same type of violations that we've seen from the company for years, if not decades. The repeated nature of the violations is indicative of chronic operational failures and systemic subpar facility maintenance," said GASP Executive Director Rachel Fiippini. "In addition to fining U.S. Steel, health officials must do what they've committed to do and get to work on coke-oven emission regulations and a procedure to protect public health when poor weather conditions combine with industrial air pollution to threaten local air quality."

"It's good that the Allegheny County Health Department is capturing these emission violations by U.S. Steel at the Clairton Coke Works," said Matt Mehalik, executive director for the Breathe Project. "Residents are tired of being subjected to a relentless number of emission violations that have disrupted the holidays and life in the Mon Valley. We are reviewing this further to check the consistency of these three documents: The Enforcement Order of June 2018; the settlement of June

2019 and the current order. Checking for consistency is important because a call for a plant hot idle could be in the balance."

"What is it going to take to get U.S. Steel Clairton Coke Works in compliance with clean air standards and keep them there?" said Dr. Ned Ketyer, a pediatrician with Physicians for Social Responsibility. "More slap-on-the-wrist fines? More children sick with asthma? More adults dying prematurely from heart disease, chronic lung disease, and cancer? More decline of a beaten-down community? So far, the answer seems to be 'none of the above.'"

"It's encouraging to see ACHD continuing to hold U.S. Steel accountable for the company's repeated violations," said Kelsey Krepps, Western Pennsylvania Outreach Coordinator for PennFuture. "If you're going to pollute, you're going to pay a fine. But without new technology and significant investment into the Clairton Coke Works facility, fines are the cost of doing business as usual."