



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mon Valley Residents Overlooked During Public Hearing on Air Quality in Clairton**

Clairton, Pa. – While environmental advocates in Allegheny County welcomed the opportunity to address the region's ongoing poor air quality and pollution problems at the U.S. Steel Clairton Plant at the "Improving Air Quality" hearing held by the Joint Democratic Policy Committee on Thursday, the hearing failed in giving the people of the Mon Valley an opportunity to speak.

Local elected officials, as the ultimate protectors of the health of the people of Allegheny County, should not allow industries to create higher cancer risks, higher respiratory and cardiovascular disease rates, higher rates of asthma and deny local citizens their right to clean air. When this happens, they should listen to the voices of suffering of the residents living in close proximity to the polluting facilities in this community.

"I have an issue with a public meeting that doesn't invite the residents of the community to speak," said Miriam Maletta, a life-long resident of Clairton who has been diagnosed with Stage 4 Lymphoma and whose family has suffered from cancer, asthma and respiratory issues through the years. "Why are we being excluded? What are they trying to hide? We are concerned for our health."

Pollution from the Clairton Coke Works affects a large number of people, particularly many low income, elderly and African American people. Some residents expressed a desire to attend today but due to work obligations could not go to the noontime meeting. Others expressed fear of repercussions in their community if they speak out.

"We applaud elected officials for organizing this hearing and acknowledging U.S. Steel's broken promises to the communities in the Mon Valley," said Geoff Bland, air quality organizer with Clean Water Action. "But the focus now must now be on the 130,000 residents living within 5 miles of the Clairton Coke Works, communities that struggle with poor air quality on a daily basis who must be at the forefront of solutions to this crisis."

"We must find less impactful ways to meet the needs of our society without creating the damage that comes from operating a plant in the way that the Clairton Coke Works operates," said Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project. "I believe that innovation and creativity should become the bedrock of our regional economy, not 19<sup>th</sup> Century production and pollution control Band-Aids."