

Ask all Allegheny Council members to stop delaying resources that the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) needs to be fully staffed to address ongoing air quality problems and outdated air permits in the county.

Ask council to bring the ordinance up for a vote to provide the resources that ACHD needs.

BACKGROUND:

- ACHD approved the resolution “Penalties, Fines and Interest (2109.7)” in September 2024 after it received a request from the ACHD administration for the resolution and with overwhelming support from residents, nonprofits and the Allegheny County Controller.
- For nearly a year, ACHD has cautioned it anticipates a \$1.85 million budget shortfall. At last week’s Board of Health meeting, they indicated the air quality program had a deficit of \$544,443 for 2024 and approved using Clean Air Funds as a partial stopgap. Article 21 permits ACHD to use 5% of the balance of Clean Air Funds for its operational needs; however, the money is supposed to go to community members from past air emissions violations.
- **The Clean Air Act requires ACHD to charge Title V facilities fees that are sufficient to cover the cost of administering the program.**
 - **This critical fee upgrade is something the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) recommended in their [2018 audit of the ACHD Title V air program](#) . It is seven years since these requirements were made, and the county still has not followed through.**
- **Approving the fee increase places the burden of covering these costs on, in most cases, multi-billion and multi-million-dollar industries that can well afford to pay the fee increase.**

CALL TO ACTION:

Email and call all members of the Allegheny County Council and urge them to stop delaying and bring the ordinance for a vote, providing the resources ACHD needs to enforce the Clean Air Act and protect the health of Allegheny County residents.

Topline Message: Where is the leadership in Allegheny County and why are Allegheny Council members delaying this vote? We encourage a transparent discussion of the concerns around the shortfall in the ACHD budget on air quality.

We need a properly funded Allegheny County Health Dept. A fee increase would allow ACHD to hire for 8-10 positions in the air quality department to facilitate this work.

Research shows that an estimated 640 -1,373 people died each year from PM2.5 pollution in Allegheny County.

Additional messaging points:

- Increased permitting fees would be paid by plant operators and applicants – **NOT** taxpayers.
 - The fee increases are monies that would **provide for** the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) Air Program budget **at no cost to taxpayers**.
- An adequately funded ACHD is critical to protecting the health of Allegheny County residents, yet the staff currently working to protect our air quality is under-resourced and overworked. <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/health/2025/01/26/iulia-vann-allegheny-county-health-department/stories/202501190046>
- A properly funded Air Program could mean more health protections from dangerous air pollution.
- Without the increased permitting fees, the Air Program will be weakened, putting more Allegheny County residents in harm's way.
- **U.S. Steel is lobbying hard against the increased fees, but it is not about the money – they can easily afford to pay these increased permit fees:**
 - U.S. Steel makes the dubious claim that the fee increases would have a detrimental impact. Yet U.S. Steel's three Mon Valley facilities each currently pay an annual fee of \$8,000 for the facility's Title V permit. The Clairton facility alone released [1.1 million pounds of toxic emissions into the air](#) in 2021.
 - Under ACHD's proposed fee increases, U.S. Steel's annual total Title V fees for its Allegheny County facilities would be \$165,000, just 0.009% of U.S. Steel reported earnings of \$2.14 billion in 2023. Compared to such monumental earnings, any claim that the significantly smaller Title V renewal permit fee, required only once every five years, would impact U.S. Steel's coffers further strains credulity.
 - In **just the first quarter of 2023, ACHD found more than 1,500 instances of non-compliance** at U.S. Steel's Clairton Plant alone. U.S. Steel's egregious level of noncompliance required significant ACHD resources to identify and rein in, including for inspections and enforcement actions. This imbalance between ACHD's time and effort necessary to ensure compliance and the current fee structure exemplifies that raising the fees is needed and warranted.
 - Additionally, for **smaller facilities that emit less than 50 tons per year, the current fee of \$8,000 will increase to only \$15,000.**
 - The fee schedule thereby ensures that the largest facilities that most burden the community and ACHD are the focal point of these fee increases.

We strongly urge Allegheny County Council to provide for needed funding for ACHD by requiring facilities that are responsible for the pollution affecting the county's air to cover the cost of ACHD protecting our communities.

Contact Allegheny County Council Members:

Council Members Allegheny County, PA 412-350-6490. One call goes to all 15 members.

Email Addresses, Twitter handles for Allegheny County Council Members:

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Be sure to provide your name and contact information when you reach out to Council.

And please share this important action alert with other Allegheny County residents!

There will be opportunities to provide public comments to Allegheny County Council in the coming weeks.

We will provide updates on when those meetings will occur. We would love to have you join us in a show of support for this critical issue.

Thank you.

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