

May 13, 2026

**Remarks for Public Comment**

ACHD Board of Health Meeting  
Gold Room, Room 410 (4th floor)  
Allegheny County Courthouse  
436 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: ACHD's Improvements in Community Engagement; Next Steps to Address EJ Concerns

Dear ACHD Board Members and Leadership:

I am Matthew Mehalik, Executive Director of the Breathe Project, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide public comment.

The Breathe Project appreciates ACHD's recent steps to improve transparency and public engagement on air quality and community health matters. In particular, we thank Dr. Vann for actions that have strengthened ACHD's relationship with impacted communities:

- Providing Zoom attendance and testimony options for people who cannot attend in person.
- Scheduling public comment at the beginning of meetings.
- Holding a BOH meeting in Duquesne in March 2026.
- Hosting this current meeting in the evening so more people can attend.
- Responding to right-to-know requests for air permit application information.
- Maintaining a respectful tone toward community members during meetings and information-sharing interactions.

Together with the re-composition of ACHD board and committee memberships, these steps have improved governance and strengthened community relationships. We appreciate that progress, and we hope it continues.

There is one additional issue that warrants attention as ACHD prepares to release the U.S. Steel Hot Strip Mill installation permit for public comment.

Pennsylvania adopted a new [Environmental Justice policy](#) in January 2026. That policy calls for enhanced public participation for projects that affect environmental justice areas, including public meetings or hearings and technical assistance for the community. Put simply, ACHD should treat the U.S. Steel Hot Strip Mill permit review as requiring more than minimum notice and comment. (Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Environmental Justice Policy, adopted Jan. 3, 2026.)

We recommend the following actions:

- Align ACHD's environmental justice practices with Pennsylvania's Environmental Justice policy.
- Provide technical consulting assistance to impacted environmental justice communities.

- Hold at least one community public meeting in addition to the required comment period.
- Extend the public comment period to at least 45 days.

Success in the Hot Strip Mill permit process would mean a transparent, well-publicized, and technically informed review that gives impacted environmental justice communities a meaningful chance to understand the proposal, shape the record, and trust the final decision.

We appreciate ACHD's continued improvements in community engagement, and we welcome further discussion.

Sincerely,

Matthew M. Mehalik, Ph.D.