October 19, 2016

Leana Wen, MD MSc
Commissioner, Baltimore City Health Department
1001 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Dr. Wen,

The Baltimore City Council will be discussing Bill 16-0621, “Transport of Crude Oil by Rail,” on November 1 at a hearing scheduled for 10:05 a.m. This bill would require the Baltimore City Health Department to conduct a Health Impact Assessment of transportation of crude oil by rail in or through Baltimore City or within 10 miles of the city’s boundaries. We hope that the Health Department has the capacity to undertake this study.

We ask that the Health Department endorse this bill.

Further, we ask that the Health Department endorse the concept of a Health Impact Assessment of crude oil trains and trains carrying other highly hazardous cargo through our neighborhoods and densely populated venues. We also ask that the Health Department provide a public review of the draft study.

This is an important safety bill for the people of Baltimore. We know that Axeon, an asphalt refining company, moved 57 million gallons of crude oil through Maryland in fiscal year 2014. This fuel went “to a Patapsco River terminal in Fairfield for transport by barge to Northeast refineries.”¹ Oil that is shipped through the state and that is not offloaded is not counted in this figure. This dangerous cargo is shipped through densely populated Baltimore where it has been estimated that 165,000 people live within one mile of the route.² Within just the 0.5 mile radius of the track are neighborhoods: Westport, Cherry, Hill, Brooklyn, Charles Village, Remington, Clifton Park and major hospitals: University of Maryland Medical Center and Hopkins Bayview. There are sports stadiums for the Ravens and for the Orioles, Royal Farms

² eaglefordtexas.com/news/id/156133/judge-rules-md-must-release-crude-oil-shipment-information
Arena, University of Baltimore campus, Walters Art Gallery, the Hippodrome, Lexington Market, the Horseshoe Casino and several light rail stations. How many private and public schools and nursery schools are in the route is probably an unknown at this time. All of these people and these facilities are directly in harm's way. In the summer of 2013, a runaway crude oil train crashed and exploded, killing 47 people and destroying the center of town in Lac-Mégantic in Quebec, Canada, population 6,000. As a more densely populated urban center, any accident in Baltimore could have much higher death and injury tolls to residents and first responders.

In addition to terrible morbidity and mortality, the damage to Baltimore's infrastructure could be immense. If the spill is over waterways, the damage to clean water and habitat may be catastrophic. The longer the delay in response time, especially if water contamination is involved, the closer to impossible the cleanup will be. Though we have fire departments with emergency plans in cities like Baltimore, it is easy to see how local personnel can quickly be overwhelmed with the magnitude of the calamity.

The Maryland Environmental Health Network reviewed “Considerations for Public Health and Safety: Crude by Rail” in a summary of health effects ranging from air and noise pollution from running these trains through neighborhoods every day to the catastrophic effects of a derailment, puncture, and explosion. Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility wrote a 33-page document, “Position Statement on Crude Oil and Transport and Storage,” presented to the governors of Washington and Oregon in February 2015.

Proposed regulations by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) allow up to a 12-hour response time for railroads in the event of a major accident. These trains often carry 1-3 million gallons of highly volatile crude oil. Train car models like the easily punctured DOT-111 involved in the Lac-Mégantic disaster are no longer allowed to carry crude oil in Canada but are still permitted to in the U.S. National standards dictate that the route through which trains that carry hazardous substances like crude oil must be assessed for safety both by carriers and emergency responders who are instructed to make “a routing analysis that considers, at a minimum, 27 safety and security factors and select a route based on its findings.” These factors include: population density, transportation hubs, places where people congregate, significant environmentally important areas, capability of first responders, history

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3 www.explosive -crude-by-rail.org
5 http://www.psr.org/chapters/oregon/assets/pdfs/or-and-wa-psr-position.pdf
6 http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2014/04/26/pick-your-poison-for-crude-pipeline-rail-truck-or-boat/#3368ae195777
7 www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/07/25/garneau-confirms-dot-111cars-won-t-be-able-to-transport-crude-oil-as-of-nov-1_n_11183574.html
of previous accidents, maintenance of the tracks, number of traffic crossings and availability of an alternative route.\(^9\)

We want to let you know about this pending bill, enclosed, and we would be happy to discuss it with you at any time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH

[Signature]

President, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

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\(^9\) https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/49/part-172/appendix-D