

October 31, 2023

Honorable Michael S. Regan
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

As local elected officials, we work every day to build healthy, resilient, economically prosperous communities. Climate change represents an existential threat to us all. It has negatively impacted our communities in profound ways, from toxic pollution to extreme weather events to costly heating and cooling. Due to structural inequities, communities of color and low-income families suffer disproportionate impacts of climate change. We recognize the EPA's ongoing leadership to tackle climate- and health-harming pollution and see many opportunities for future partnership.

Cutting methane emissions is one of the most effective ways to slow the pace of global warming. Addressing emissions from landfills, the third largest methane source in the U.S., is a critical part of that strategy. Beyond planet-warming methane, landfills emit hazardous air pollutants, odors, and other gases that impact air quality, human health, and quality of life for neighboring communities, many of whom are already vulnerable.

Local governments across the country are already taking steps to keep methane-generating organic waste out of landfills. We have made systems changes to reduce food waste and ensure surplus foods are recovered to feed those in need. Food scraps that remain are diverted to community or curbside composting programs, creating valuable soil products. Several states, such as California and Maryland, have gone further, with both source reduction and diversion initiatives, and operational requirements for landfills to better mitigate emissions for buried waste.

However, the pace of current action is not enough. Federal policy is essential to scale the methane prevention and mitigation efforts in a few leading localities to a nationwide, equitable approach. We need fast action from the EPA to deliver the methane reductions urgently needed this decade to avoid the worst consequences of the climate crisis. Specifically, we ask the EPA to:

- **Develop and implement a roadmap to phase out organic disposal in landfills and incinerators by 2040, while expanding grant funding and technical assistance for municipality-led waste management alternatives**, including source reduction, edible food donation, conversion of food scraps to animal feed, composting, anaerobic digestion, and other recycling uses. EPA should prioritize alternatives to landfilling and incineration that maximize benefits for the environment, society, and the economy – helping to address food insecurity, reduce dependence on land-intensive feed crops or carbon-intensive fuels, improve soil health, sequester carbon, and create jobs.
- **Through a rulemaking, update its existing landfill standards, with the goal of better controlling harmful emissions**. Strategies are available to better prevent, detect, and mitigate methane leaks from landfills, but EPA standards have not kept up. The EPA should immediately open a rulemaking on municipal solid waste landfill emissions standards that allows for public feedback and the careful evaluation of the cost, benefits, and emissions reductions of the best available technologies and practices.

Through timely federal action on municipal solid waste landfills, the EPA can slash dangerous methane and toxic air pollution, make progress on climate and environmental justice goals, and better protect communities across the country. Without fast action on methane, local governments will increasingly face the impacts of warming temperatures, sea level rise, and extreme weather events. From the recent hurricane in Florida to the heat dome over Phoenix, these conditions are costly for local governments and threaten the lives and wellbeing of our residents. Curbing landfill methane must be a part of our national climate strategy, and we urge the EPA to act now. Thank you for your consideration.

Teresa Acosta, Councilmember, City of Carlsbad, CA
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Emmanuel Alcantar, Youth Climate Commissioner, Los Angeles County, CA
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Debora Fudge, Town Councilmember, Town of Windsor, CA
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Leanne Greenberg, Governing Board Member, Osborn Elementary School District, Phoenix, AZ
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