



July 25, 2007

The Honorable Susan Fargo
Committee on Public Health, Senate Chair
State House Room 504
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Peter Koutoujian
Committee on Public Health, House Chair
State House, Room 130
Boston, MA 02133

RE: An Act Relative to Reporting on Health Effects of Particulate Matter
House Bill 2227

An Act Promoting Healthy Communities and the Environment
Senate Bill 129

Dear Chairperson Koutoujian, Chairperson Fargo, and Members of the Committee:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) strongly supports House Bill 2227, An Act Relative to Reporting on Health Effects of Particulate Matter and Senate Bill 129, An Act Promoting Healthy Communities and the Environment.

A. House Bill 2227

House Bill 2227 would require the completion of a study which would provide information about health effects of particulate matter pollution from transportation sources. CLF believes that the study recommended in this bill is needed to inform policy, development and transportation decisions to protect public health in the Commonwealth.

CLF is a non-profit member-supported organization that works to solve the most significant environmental problems that threaten New England. Particulate matter pollution is an issue that challenges all parts of the Commonwealth. Massachusetts is crisscrossed with major roadways and we have a number of opportunities to reduce exposure to emissions from these roadways as well as rail lines. House Bill 2227 would provide us with information to make choices that would reduce the public health risks associated with particulate matter emissions from transportation and thereby address a significant health threat in Massachusetts.

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CONSERVATION LAW FOUNDATION

Information is available that suggests that the health impacts associated with particulate matter emissions from roadways are severe and include increased risk of pulmonary and cardiovascular diseases. There is sound information available nationally about the risks associated with exposure to particulate matter. House Bill 2227 would provide information about the particulate matter emissions from transportation in the Commonwealth in particular and equip us to make choices about steps we can take to protect residents.

The good news is that, once we understand particulate matter pollution and identify the areas where people are most at risk, there are steps we can take to protect the health of Massachusetts residents. Those steps could include improving technology to reduce emissions, both from trains and vehicles on roadways. They could also include guidelines for siting new development, especially homes and schools. In addition, it is possible to reduce exposure to transportation emissions for those spending time in existing buildings near roadways through improvements to those buildings.

CLF recognizes that an increased awareness of risks associated with exposure to particulate matter from transportation sources may pose challenges as we strive to advance smart growth. We strongly support smart growth efforts including transit-oriented development and infill development in urban areas and town centers. Such development advances a number of environmental goals, including decreased sprawl, decreased consumption of open space, reduced vehicle miles traveled, improved regional air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. In general, encouraging people to live near transportation reduces travel time and distance, and therefore reduces congestion and pollution. In some cases, advancing smart growth goals through siting of new development in locations convenient to transportation may seem to be at odds with a goal of reducing exposure to particulate matter and other localized transportation emissions. However, CLF believes that Massachusetts can continue to support good smart growth development while reducing health risks from particulate matter and other transportation emissions. House Bill 2227 will provide us with information to find the appropriate balance in our policy decisions so that we can protect public health while continuing to advance smart growth.

House Bill 2227 will provide the information and recommendations needed to guide our transportation and development choices to ensure the protection of public health. The sooner this information is available to us, the sooner we can make truly informed decisions about transportation and development investments to assure that public health is protected.

CLF requests that House Bill 2227 be favorably reported out of committee.

Senate Bill 129

Senate Bill 129, An Act Promoting Healthy Communities and the Environment, would provide important protections to environmental justice communities across the Commonwealth. This bill would provide information about the areas of the

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Commonwealth where harmful impacts of pollution are experienced at the highest levels and require analysis of health impacts for projects proposed in those communities. This bill will provide the public and decision-makers with information to needed to ensure that communities in the Commonwealth are not disproportionately burdened by environmental impacts.

Massachusetts does not currently have a system to identify communities experiencing disproportionate environmental burdens or to ensure equitable distribution of environmental burdens to protect residents' health. Senate Bill 129 will augment our existing environmental review process with information that is needed to protect residents in communities where the cumulative impacts of environmental hazards are causing unacceptable health impacts.

CLF requests that Senate Bill be favorably reported out of committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these two important bills.

Sincerely,



Carrie Russell
Staff Attorney