

Testimony on House Bill No. 2227 An Act Relative to Reporting on Health Effects of Particulate Matter

Submitted to the Public Health Committee

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My name is Isabel Grantham and I am a Research Assistant at the Environmental League of Massachusetts. The League is an advocacy and policy organization that has been working to improve our commonwealth's environment for more than a century. We would like to be recorded in favor of House Bill No. 2227, "An Act Relative to Reporting on Health Effects of Particulate Matter."

Particulate Matter or (PM) pollution has been receiving increased attention from environmental and public health officials, scientists and non-profit groups statewide. It is becoming a serious problem within Massachusetts, as the state ranks 5th within the U.S. for being at risk from diesel soot (a leading source of PM)¹. Fossil fuel combustion is the primary source of particulate pollution, with automobile emissions contributing significantly to this supply.

Recent important scientific studies have found an association between exposure to particulate matter and considerable health problems including; aggravated asthma, chronic bronchitis, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, heart attack and premature death in people with heart or lung disease². However, further studies must be conducted to solidify and understand the link between particulate matter pollution and health effects, specifically looking at those people who are most at risk.

House Bill 2227 directs the Department of Public Health to conduct a comprehensive study on the health effects of particulate air pollution from surface transportation. As automobile combustion is an important cause of PM pollution, conducting research into areas within 500 feet of large roadways as well as focusing on 'sensitive individuals' in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and child care centers, would help to document the full extent of the problem of particulate matter pollution in our state. With this information in hand, the legislature, the Department of Public Health, and other state agencies will be in a better position to make policy decisions that could reduce health threats.

House Bill 2227 is an important step in the right direction for providing a healthy environment for a humans and wildlife alike. The Environmental League urges the Committee to report this Bill out favorably. Thank you for this opportunity to submit a testimony.

¹ <http://www.catf.us/projects/diesel/dieselhealth/state.php?s=25&site=0>

² www.epa.gov/pm/