**\*\*\*Draft Letter for State and Local Elected Officials on Proposed Ozone Standards\*\*\***

[Month Day, Year]

Mr. Brian Deese

Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor

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Dear Mr. Deese:

 As the [title] of [town, state or other governing unit], [I am/we are] deeply concerned about the harmful impact to [my/our] constituents from the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) recently proposed rule to make ozone standards more stringent. Being [a] local leader[s], [I/we] know that businesses are still struggling and that municipal budgets are being increasingly squeezed tighter. Right now, communities across the country like [town, state or other governing unit] need more economic growth and less red tape. Instead, this proposal puts new burden on commercial and industrial activity not only vital to creating jobs, but also to providing tax revenue that support important local services like public safety and education. EPA is pursing these new more stringent ozone standards even though the air is already getting cleaner under current standards that states have not had the opportunity to fully implement. In fact, in some places, EPA’s proposed standards are so low that they are unattainable. The hardship of stringent ozone standards to the people [I/we] represent is real and immediate, while the benefits are unverified and uncertain. Therefore, [I/we] strongly urge you to encourage the President to instruct EPA to retain the current ozone standard when finalizing this proposal.

 Stringent ozone standards could limit economic expansion in nearly every populated region of the United States and impair the ability of U.S. companies to create new jobs. From a national and even global perspective, making America a less attractive place to do business risks shipping jobs overseas – often to countries with weaker environmental laws. On the ground in communities like [mine/ours’] though, EPA’s proposal is bad for businesses, bad for workers, and bad for local governments. Ozone standards at the levels proposed by EPA will directly impact economic vitality of local communities and make it difficult to attract and develop business, stunting the economic growth that fuels well-paid jobs that local workers depend on to provide for their families. That growth is also vital to the tax revenue that local governments rely on to pay their police officers, firemen, teachers, and other important municipal workers. [I am/We are] concerned that EPA is overlooking the risk that its proposed stringent standards pose not only to the livelihoods of [my/our] constituents, but also to the ability of [town, state or other governing unit] to serve its citizens.

 EPA’s proposed range of ozone standards would immediately add red tape to companies seeking to grow in any part of the country, even in areas that can attain those standards. Areas that fall short of these stringent standards – “nonattainment areas” – face even stiffer consequences. Companies building or modifying facilities in a nonattainment area could be required to install the most effective emission reduction technology, regardless of cost*.* As well, states are mandated to offset ozone-formingemissions from new or modified projects in a nonattainment area by finding emissions reductions from other nearby existing sources. If no party is willing to provide offsets, then the project cannot go forward. Nonattainment designation also has profound impact on infrastructure development vital to the business community. Federally-supported highway and transit projects in a nonattainment area cannot proceed unless the state can demonstrate that the project will not increase ozone-forming emissions. Ultimately, the increased costs associated with restrictive and expensive permit requirements would likely deter companies from siting new facilities in a nonattainment area. Yet, these restrictions do not disappear when an area finally comes into attainment. Instead, former nonattainment areas face a legacy of seeking EPA approval for plans that specify enforceable measures to maintain standards as well as contingencies to be implemented promptly if an ozone standard is violated.

 While [I/we] believe that economic prosperity is vital to [my/our] communities, [I/we] also value clean air. [My/our] famil[y/ies] breath[s] the same air as the families [I/we] represent. [I am/we are] proud that emissions leading to ozone have been cut in half since 1980. And we can expect the air to get still cleaner. Current standards, updated just six years ago, were delayed when EPA effectively suspended implementation for two years while it unsuccessfully pursued reconsideration. This country will see even greater reductions in ozone as [states/local communities] like [town, state or other governing unit] make up lost ground in putting the current standards into effect. Indeed, substantial resources, both in time and money, are currently being committed towards achieving emissions reductions under those current ozone standards. Proposing new standards before we at the state and local level can even catch up with EPA’s delays in implementing existing ozone standards unfairly moves the goal posts on local communities and unnecessarily burdens administrative resources. EPA’s proposal is particularly unfair to communities where the proposed range is at or near the level of background ozone that is naturally occurring or internationally transported. In fact, EPA’s proposal is so low that even remote counties far from industrial activity would fall into nonattainment. According to EPA’s own data, even the pristine Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Parks would fail the proposed ozone standards. EPA should not force areas to endure the pain and hardship of nonattainment through standards that are not, in fact, attainable.

 The air is getting cleaner, and local communities deserve an opportunity to make current ozone standards work. In light of the economic hardship, reduction in funding for crucial civic services, and administrative strain on state and local agencies, [I/we] call on the President to instruct EPA to retain the existing ozonestandards in the final rule.

Sincerely,

cc: Ms. Valerie Jarrett

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