



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Challenges Trump Administration Rule Retaining Insufficient Standards for Particulate Matter Pollution

BALTIMORE, MD (January 13, 2021) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today joined a coalition of 17 attorneys general and the City of New York in filing a [lawsuit](#) challenging the Trump administration’s decision to leave current National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate matter pollution unchanged. Particulate matter (PM) is a pollutant emitted from a variety of sources including vehicles, factories, and construction sites.

Particulate matter exposure at the current standards causes up to 45,000 deaths per year nationwide and disproportionately impacts Maryland’s most vulnerable populations. In addition, particulate matter is linked to increased mortality from COVID-19 and many other serious public health problems, including cardiovascular disease, respiratory impacts, and cancer.

“Breathing particulate matter causes people to get sick and die. The low standards pushed by the Trump administration may add to the profits of some polluters, but they endanger public health,” said Attorney General Frosh.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to set NAAQS for several pollutants, including particulate matter at a level that protects public health and welfare. The EPA is required to periodically review the standards and revise them if new information shows that the existing standards are inadequate. EPA standards provide key support for state programs to address particulate matter pollution within their borders. This partnership reduced annual concentrations of PM_{2.5} by 39 percent between 2000 and 2018, but evidence shows that more protection is necessary. Since the EPA’s last review in 2012, new studies have made clear that exposure to particulate matter causes grievous health impacts, even at levels below the current standards. The EPA’s own staff concurred on these conclusions. Additionally, multiple studies – highlighted in [June](#) and November comment letters submitted by state attorneys general – have found links between mortality from COVID-19 and particulate matter exposure.

In the lawsuit, the coalition argues that the EPA’s decision to retain the current standards for particulate matter pollution was arbitrary and capricious because the EPA conducted a flawed and unlawfully biased review of the current NAAQS and available science clearly demonstrates the need for the EPA to strengthen NAAQS.

In filing today's lawsuit, Attorney General Frosh joins the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin, as well as the City of New York.