



BUREAU OF HEALTH

TESTIMONY

Environmental and Natural Resources Protection

Public Hearing on the Issuance of Permits in Environmental Justice Areas/HB 109

March 4, 2025
Lathem Hall
Widener University
Chester, PA

Submitted: Kristin Motley, PharmD, MBA

Slide 1 – Title Slide

I am Dr. Kristin Motley, the Health Commissioner for the City of Chester. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you in this forum, and thank you for holding this hearing in Chester, PA, ground zero for environmental justice. Unfortunately, in PA, this issue is more common than we may realize.

Slide 2

This image shows how widespread environmental justice is across the Commonwealth. In fact, there are almost 2000 environment justice areas in Pennsylvania according to the PA Department of Environmental Protection.

As you can see from the legend, light yellow shows no or little environmental pollution burden. As the colors deepen, the burden is intensified. The dark blue hues show significant burden.

From this map, you can easily see how vast this issue is across PA. If I were to zoom in to focus on the southeastern part of the state, where we are today, you will see dark blue spread throughout this entire region in Delaware County and Philadelphia region. The impact of pollution is even more devastating here because this area is much more densely populated than rural areas across the state.

Not only are there almost 2000 environment justice areas in PA, every member of this committee has at least one EJ area in their district. If you think this is an issue that does not impact the people who vote for you, you are wrong.

Slide 3

In the 123rd district where Rep Tim Twardiz serves, the people of Reilly Township are dealing with the impacts of being exposed to environmental pollutants like pesticides, plus traffic, plus landfills, plus coal mines. The health consequences of one of these alone is a lot to bear in this low-income community. Yet, they have to deal with the health impacts of pollution from these multiple sources.

Before DEP is allowed to issue another permit near this community, we are asking you to allow them to consider the environmental burden that's already plaguing the people who live there. Let them check.

Slide 4

Next, let's take a look at the 63rd district in the western part of PA where Rep Bashline serves. As you can see, his voters in Piney Township are dealing with the environmental impacts of automobile traffic, plus oil and gas wells, plus a hazardous waste facility, plus flood risks, plus coal mines.

Don't let DEP issue another permit in this community without allowing them to consider the environmental burden that's impacting the health of the people who live there. Let them check.

Slide 5

Last, we examine what's happening in Chester which is in Rep Carol Kazeem district. Chester is the first city in the US to be identified as an environmental justice community. People living and working in and near Chester are impacted by pollution from chemical plants, plus airplanes, plus trains from the railroad that runs through town, plus an oil refinery neighbor, plus a solid waste facility, plus traffic from inter-state highway in addition the industrial highway, both of which run through Chester. Then on top of all of that and other sources of pollution that I did not list here, Chester is home to the country's largest trash incinerator.

You may think that Chester has reached its saturation point where another polluting industry would not even think of coming here. That's simply not true. It's apparent that the people of Chester have been the ideal community for polluting industries to set up shop. If you think DEP should issue another permit without taking into account all of these entities that already contribute to the poor health outcomes and tragic economic situation of the city, then we have a problem. DEP should absolutely take these factors into account before issuing another permit. Let them check.

Slide 6

Even though the children from these communities are different races and ethnicities, they live in households with different income levels, they will pursue very different paths in life, they do have one thing in common. They will have higher risk of asthma, cancer, heart disease and other PREVENTABLE health conditions. They also live in communities with high rates of disability and where a significant number of people are

uninsured. In fact, the leading cause of death in these areas are, cancer, heart disease and respiratory disease. The societal and economic impact of these environmental burdens are too costly to continue to ignore.

Slide 7

As adults, these children will contribute to the \$3 billion that it costs to provide care to people with asthma. They will contribute to the \$150 billion it costs to provide healthcare to people with cancer.

Lastly, they will contribute to the \$237 billion it costs to provide care to people with heart disease. PA alone spends over \$15 billion a year on people with heart disease. This is preventable.

Slide 8

We are not asking that DEP block every single permit that is requested in these communities. The residents absolutely want to attract businesses to their towns for all the economic and social benefits that result. We are simply saying we don't want businesses that add to our environmental burden. Let the experts at DEP consider the sources of pollutions before issuing new permits. Let them check.

We're not asking you to go out on a limb to see if this works or to see if it helps or hurts the economy. We already have this data. Cumulative impact laws have been successfully implemented various states including New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. In fact, I called a legislator in NJ last week to find out how their cumulative impacts bill negatively impacted the state's economy. They said that haven't seen any negative impacts of it. They shared that Camden in particular, which has a significantly high environmental burden, is experiencing an economic boom. And that's what happens when you let them check.

The bill may not be perfect as written. But I urge you to sit with your colleagues and work together to make it better. No matter where we live in PA, we want the same things. (1) We want our children to have a solid education – kids with asthma miss too many days of school, (2) we want safe communities – the air in these environmental justice communities is literally causing cancer and heart disease, it's killing people, and (3) we want good jobs – these jobs can't generate enough revenue to pay for the health effects they cause. Tax payers end up paying.

If you haven't already signed on, this is your chance. Get this bill through Committee and work with your colleagues to make it better. Make the necessary changes to allow DEP to do a better job at protecting our beloved state and all the people who live and work here, all while ensuring that PA continues to see economic growth. As I said at the beginning of my testimony, each of you serve as least one environmental justice community in your district. Many of you have several in your district. This matters to you. And it matters to your voters. So please, let them check.

Thank you

From Environmental Crisis to Economic Consequences: A Call for Action in Pennsylvania

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Kristin Motley, PharmD, MBA
Health Commissioner
City of Chester

Widespread Environmental Burden

There are **1,965** environmental justice communities throughout Pennsylvania

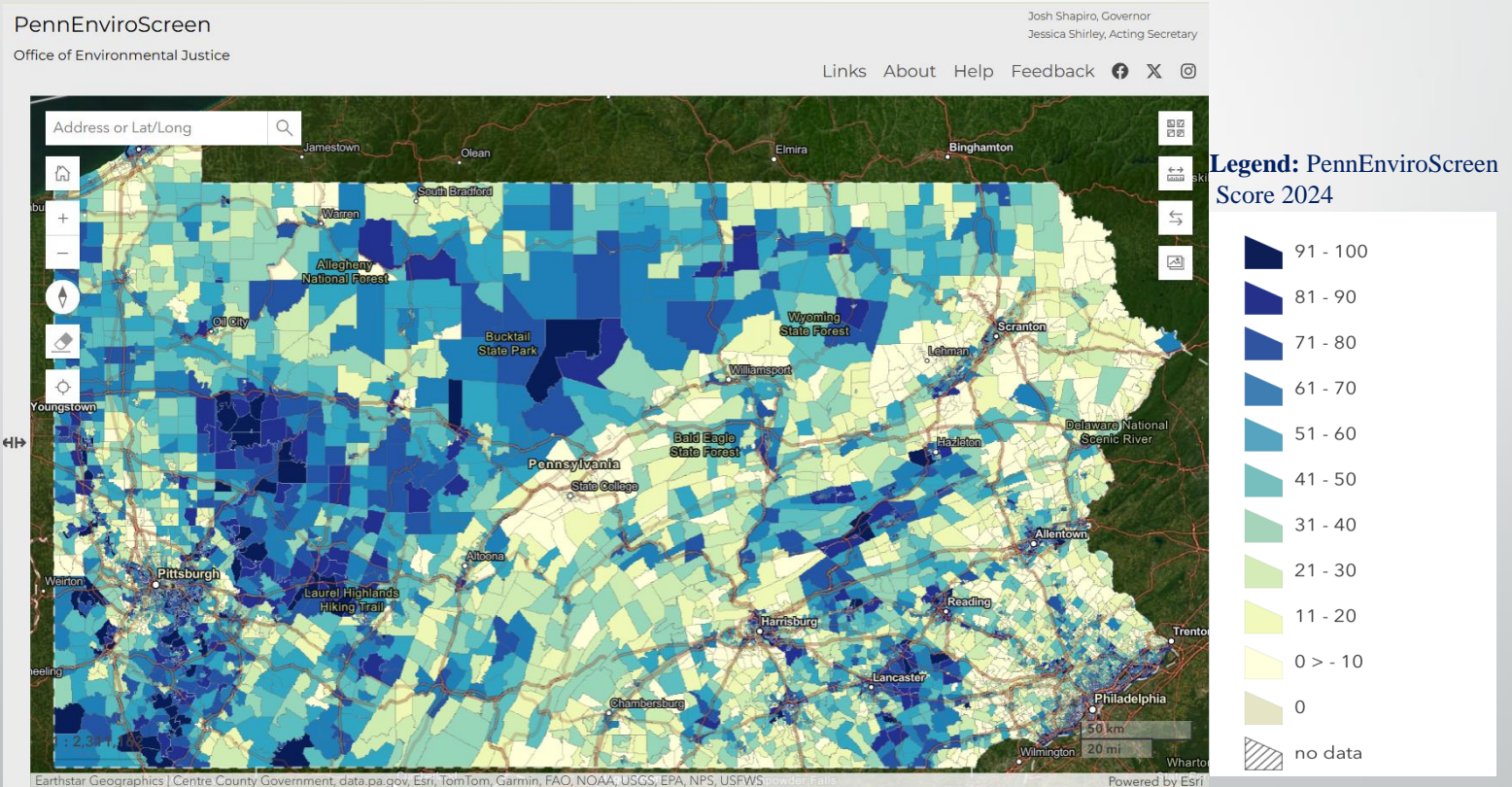


Figure 1: Penn EnviroScreen

Reference: PennEnviroScreen. Pennsylvania department of environmental protection. Accessed February 28, 2025. <https://gis.dep.pa.gov/PennEnviroScreen/>

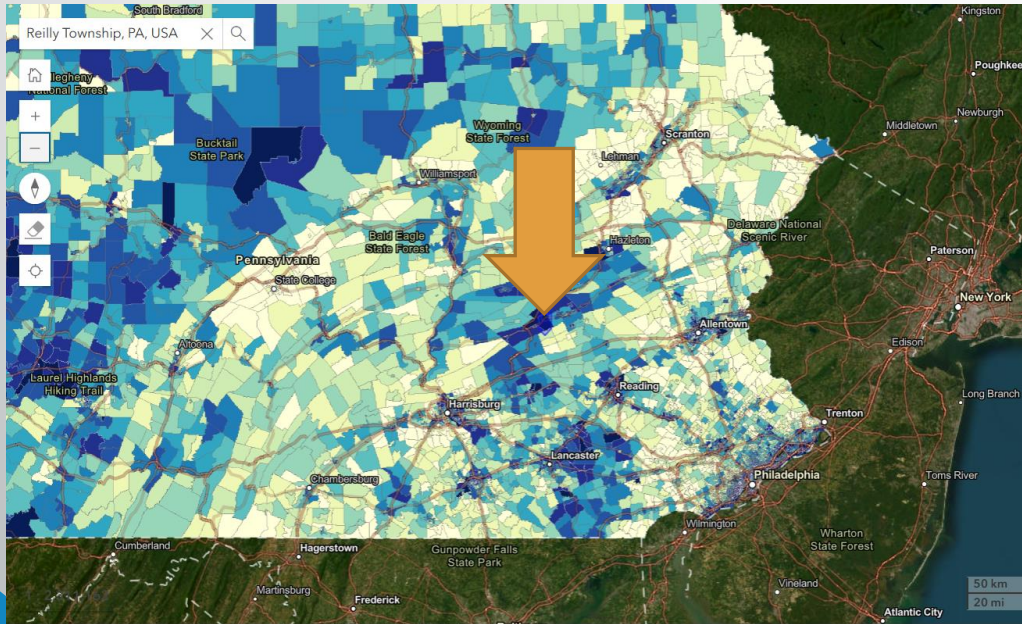


Environmental Burden by District

Reilly Township, PA in Schuylkill County

123rd District, Rep Tim Twardzik

Final Score Percentile: 93



4. Coal
Mines



3. Landfill



2. Traffic



1. Pesticides

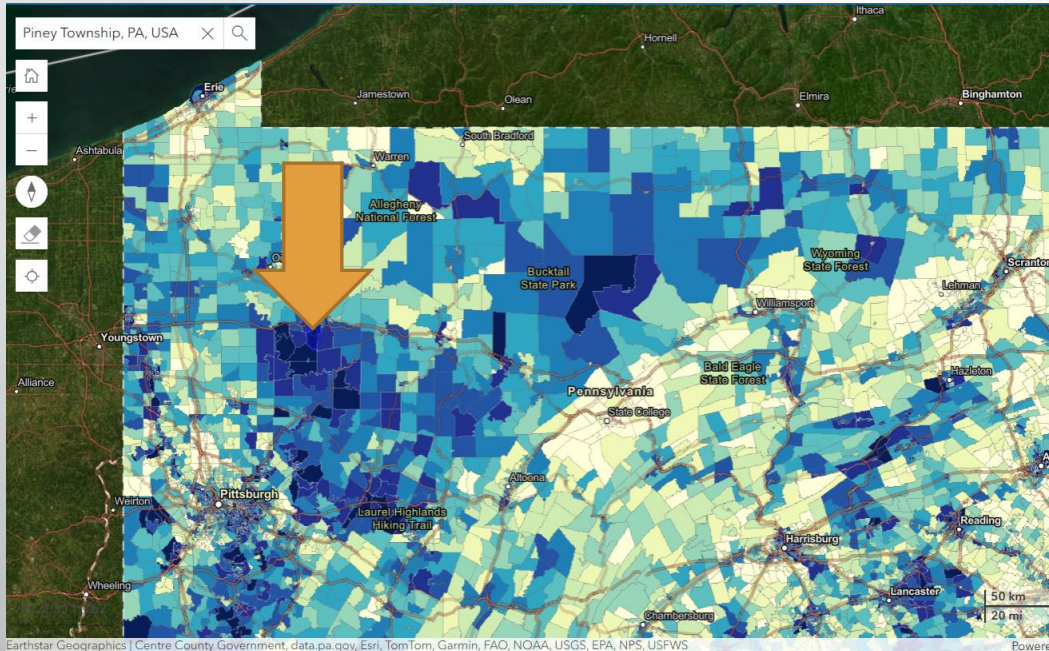


Environmental Burden by District

Piney Township, PA in Clarion County

63rd District , Rep John Bashline

Final Score Percentile: 92



5. Coal Mines



4. Flood Risk



3. Hazardous Waste Facility



2. Oil and Gas Wells



1. Traffic

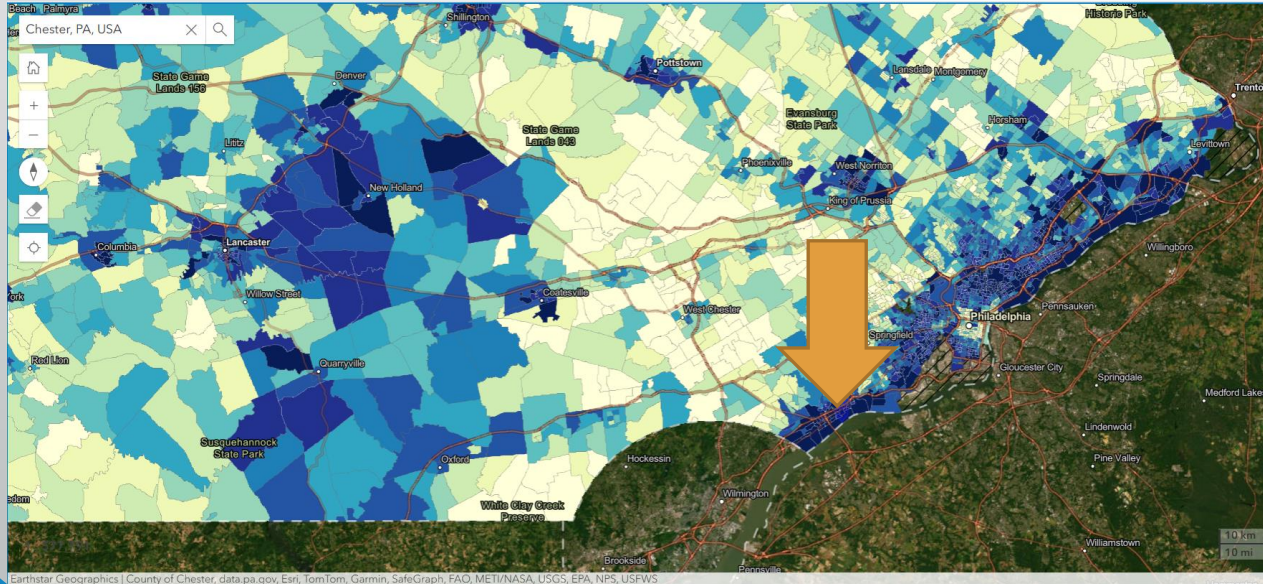


Environmental Burden by District

Chester, PA in Delaware County

159th District - Rep Carol Kazeem

Final Score Percentile: 100



7. Trash Incinerator



6. Traffic



5. Solid Waste Facility



4. Oil Refinery



3. Railroad



2. Airplanes



1. Chemical Plants



Delays in Environmental Justice Create Long-Term Risks for Our Children (cont.)

Asthma

Cancer

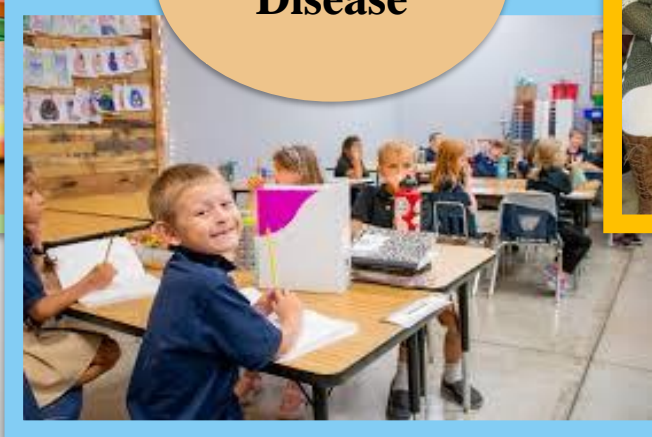
Heart Disease



Reilly Township, PA



Chester, PA



Piney Township, PA

Disability

No Insurance

Delays in Action Amplify Healthcare Costs and Loss of Productivity



Asthma¹

- The annual per-person medical cost of asthma was **\$3,266**
- Missed work and school days, combined, **cost \$3 billion per year**, representing 8.7 million workdays and 5.2 million school days



Cancer^{4,5}

- For patients undergoing chemotherapy, average annual medical and pharmacy expenses can reach approximately **\$111,000**
- In 2020, the productivity cost of cancer mortality was **\$147.6 billion**



Heart Disease^{2,3}

- PA spends **over \$15 billion annually**
- The mean annual cost of treating heart disease was **\$5,540** per adult
- Indirect costs, including lost productivity, costs **\$237 billion**, and is project to increase 55% by 2035

References: 1. AMJC. CDC Study Puts Economic Burden of Asthma at More Than \$80 Billion Per Year. Accessed February 28, 2025. <https://www.ajmc.com/view/cdc-study-puts-economic-burden-of-asthma-at-more-than-80-billion-per-year> 2. AHRQ. Healthcare Expenditures for Heart Disease among Adults Aged 18 and Older in the U.S. Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population, 2020. Accessed February 28, 2025. https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/st550/stat550.pdf 3. AHA. Cardiovascular disease: a costly burden for America. Accessed February 28, 2025. <https://www.heart.org/-/media/Files/About-Us/Policy-Research/Fact-Sheets/Public-Health-Advocacy-and-Research/CVD-A-Costly-Burden-for-America-Projections-Through-2035.pdf> 5. Bradley CJ, Yabroff KR, Dahman B, Feuer EJ, Mariotto A, Brown ML. Productivity costs of cancer mortality in the United States: 2000-2020.



