Dear EPA,

I am Loni Russell from California. I am a concerned citizen and a member of the Moms Clean Air Force. The sign below is for you as I am presenting testimony on behalf of our members who couldn’t be here today.

I am here today because I care deeply about the future of our children and the communities across the country and the world that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts and dirty air.

Children are particularly vulnerable to climate change, making asthma triggers worse and extreme heat is hard on little bodies. The soot and smog pollution that climate change exacerbates damages developing lungs and increases respiratory infections. California's Central Valley has some of the dirtiest air in the country with high rates of childhood asthma. The culprits are two components of air pollution: ground-level ozone and particulate matter. Ground-level ozone can have corrosive effects on the lungs, decreasing lung function. The simple act of breathing carries these particles deep into the lungs where they stick and can cause breathing and heart problems. With climate change, these impacts will only worsen.

Low income and communities of color are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and climate change impacts. Another important reason I ask you to protect our communities by moving forward and strengthening the Clean Power Plan.

Communities are already being harmed by climate change. Extreme weather damages our homes and the places we love. It harms our agricultural communities in California, which grow and cultivate food for the entire country and sea level rise threatens our coastline. California is currently suffering the worse drought we’ve seen in decades, which with climate change will only happen more frequently. In Northern Philippines, where my family is from, more severe typhoons, severe flooding and severe temperatures are already threatening the fragile ecosystems and quality of life in the region. Last year, my family's home in the Philippines was flooded with over five feet of water for several weeks on end, flooding that great had never previously been seen in the region. With the impacts of climate change, this already fragile area of the world will only be put in greater danger.

My parents and family emigrated from the Philippines, working as maintenance workers, housecleaners and nursing assistants. My family may not be environmentalists per say but share a common value of protecting the health of their children and the communities around them. They have engrained in me a deep sense of responsibility to care for the health of vulnerable communities including the health of children and the elderly, especially those that may not have the same opportunities as others. I am privileged to be able to speak up for those in my family to address the most important environmental and socio-economic challenge of our time: climate change.
The US must reduce its emissions moving forward. Its impact is not only felt locally but around the globe. Carbon pollution from power plants is the largest single source of carbon dioxide emissions. The EPA’s Clean Power Plan is an important first step in addressing climate change for the US. I ask that EPA strengthens the Clean Power Plan and finalizes a rule that reduces carbon dioxide emissions 40% below 2005 levels by 2020.

We have a moral obligation to act to protect our children and to leave them a planet that is better than we found it. Continued leadership is needed to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink and the quality of life that we continue to value. We must ensure that we continue to act on climate and protect the diversity that defines America’s distinct landscape.

Thank you for your time and attention. I appreciate the opportunity to testify.

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