

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Pam Bondi  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Administrator Zeldin and Attorney General Bondi:

We write to express deep concern regarding the federal government's decision to dismiss the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) lawsuit against Denka Performance Elastomer LLC (Denka) related to its neoprene manufacturing facility in Louisiana. This decision represents a significant setback in the ongoing fight for environmental justice for historically disadvantaged communities, who bear the disproportionate burden of industrial pollution. We urge the EPA and the Department of Justice to take meaningful action to address the public health crisis caused by Denka's emissions, particularly chloroprene, a hazardous air pollutant, and to prioritize protecting the health and welfare of the American people.

For decades, the residents of Louisiana's industrial corridor have lived with elevated exposure to harmful industrial pollutants, including the chloroprene released in significant quantities from the Denka facility. According to an EPA report on chloroprene, "short term exposure to high concentrations can affect the nervous system (e.g., headache, irritability, dizziness), the heart (rapid heartbeats), gastrointestinal disorders, dermatitis, temporary hair loss and corneal damage. It may also affect the lungs, liver, kidneys and the immune system. Long term exposure to chloroprene has been reported to cause respiratory, eye and skin irritation, chest pains temporary hair loss, neurological symptoms (e.g., dizziness, insomnia, headaches) and fatigue in occupationally exposed workers. Effects in the cardiovascular system (rapid heartbeat, reduced blood pressure) and changes in blood cell parameters (red blood cells, hemoglobin content, white blood cells, and platelets) have also been reported in occupationally exposed workers. Long term exposure to chloroprene has also been associated with an increase in the risk of developing cancer."

Chloroprene was identified by the EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) in 2010 as a likely human carcinogen. The IRIS assessment provided a unit risk estimate (URE), establishing the upper-bound excess lifetime cancer risk associated with continuous exposure to chloroprene at a concentration of 1 microgram per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) in air. This URE was used in the 2011 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA), reinforcing the serious risks posed by chloroprene emissions to nearby residents. EPA determined that chloroprene levels in the air near the Denka facility far exceed what is considered safe—many times higher than the EPA's recommended safety threshold of  $0.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ -- raising urgent concerns about the long-term health effects on residents, including increased cancer risks. The elevated chemical emissions are especially concerning since the Denka facility is located near an elementary school.

In February 2023, EPA filed a lawsuit against Denka for violating the Clean Air Act by emitting dangerous levels of chloroprene. The lawsuit was brought under Section 303 of the Clean Air Act, which allows the EPA to take legal action when pollution presents an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health. EPA's suit compelled Denka to immediately reduce emissions and protect public health.

Considering the EPA's own well-documented evidence of potential harm from this chemical, the decision to abandon legal action against Denka is alarming and signals a troubling disregard for the health and well-being of vulnerable communities.

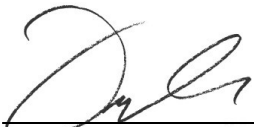
Given the well documented risk posed by chloroprene, we respectfully ask you to answer the below questions:

1. In light of this decision, what specific steps does the agency plan to take to reduce chloroprene emissions from the Denka facility to levels that protect public health?
2. How does the EPA intend to fulfill its mission to protect human health and the environment from hazardous air pollution – pollution the agency is obligated to limit under the Clean Air Act – if it withdraws enforcement actions against known violators?

The health of Americans should not be sacrificed in favor of corporate interests. Our constituents, and particularly impacted fenceline communities, deserve more than inaction and regulatory rollbacks—they deserve meaningful protection and accountability. We urge both the EPA and the Department of Justice to reconsider this decision and to take decisive steps to reduce pollution exposure for the people who need it most.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your response.

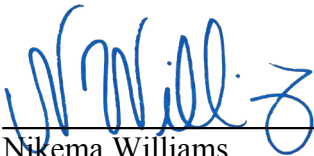
Sincerely,



Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields  
Member of Congress



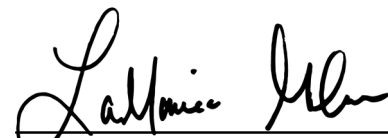
Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver  
Member of Congress



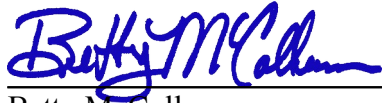
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Teresa Leger Fernandez  
Member of Congress



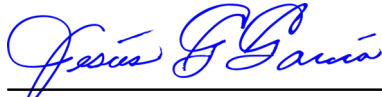
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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



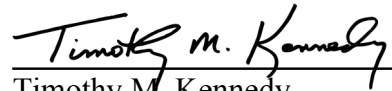
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



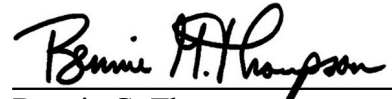
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Timothy M. Kennedy  
Member of Congress



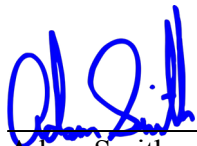
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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



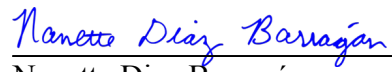
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Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



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Valerie P. Foushee  
Member of Congress



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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



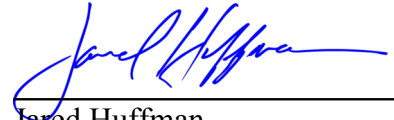
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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



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Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress