

**Testimony of S. William Becker  
on behalf of the  
State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators  
and the  
Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials  
before the  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent  
Agencies  
regarding the  
FY 2005 Budget of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
March 25, 2004**

I am Bill Becker, the Executive Director of STAPPA and ALAPCO, two national associations of state and local air pollution control agencies in 53 states and territories and over 165 major metropolitan areas across the United States. These agencies have the primary responsibility under the Clean Air Act for implementing our nation's clean air program. Thank you for this opportunity to testify about EPA's FY 2005 budget, particularly grants to state and local air pollution control agencies under Sections 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act.

I am here today to tell you about the severe funding shortfall that state and local air quality agencies face and to ask your assistance.

Section 105 of the Clean Air Act authorizes the federal government to provide grants up to 60 percent of the cost of state and local air quality programs, while state and local agencies must provide a 40-percent match. The reality is that the federal share represents only about 25 percent of the total, while state and local governments provide 75 percent.

Every year, about \$900 million is spent on state and local efforts to implement the Clean Air Act. A study we conducted with EPA several years ago concluded that state and local programs faced a *deficit* of about \$163 million, meaning that the total needed is over \$1 billion each year. If EPA were to support 60 percent of that total, as the Clean Air Act envisioned, federal grants would amount to \$600 million annually.

Unfortunately, the Administration has recommended a total of \$228.6 million in FY 2005 for grants to state and local air quality agencies, which is far short of \$600 million. To make matters worse, over the past decade, federal grants for state and local air agencies to operate their programs have decreased by 25 percent in terms of purchasing power.

In light of our need for a substantial increase, the budget request is insufficient. However, we recognize that Congress must address many competing needs. Therefore, although air pollution poses a significant threat to public health and should be among our highest priorities, we recommend that federal grants to state and local air quality agencies be increased by only \$100 million above the President's request in FY 2005, for a total of \$328.6 million. This will not fill the gap entirely, but it will provide a much needed increase. Unless state and local air quality programs receive a substantial boost in funding, they will continue to struggle to protect and improve air quality.

Why should the federal government, or any of us, care about cleaning up the air?

In spite of our best efforts, air pollution poses a serious threat to public health and the environment. In fact, we know of no other environmental problem that presents a *greater* risk. It is a pervasive and universal danger – all of us breathe. We have no choice in the matter. While some of us can choose to eat certain foods or select what we drink, we have no option but to breathe the air in our midst.

Unfortunately, many, if not most, of us in the United States are exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution. In this country, over 170 million tons of pollution are emitted into the air each year. An astounding 133 million people live in areas of the country that violate at least one of the six health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Many millions are exposed to toxic air pollutants that cause cancer and other health problems. When we consider our children, who are among our most sensitive and precious populations, the bad news mounts. EPA data indicate that *all* children live in counties in which the combined estimated concentrations of hazardous air pollutants exceed a cancer risk of 1-in-100,000. Between 1980 and 1995, the percentage of children with asthma doubled, to 7.5 percent, and by 2001, 8.7 percent of all children had asthma. These figures are downright shocking.

If state and local air agencies were to receive increased funds, there are a number of high-priority activities on which they would use them. For example, they will be required to develop plans to implement the 8-hour ozone standard, which is an effort that will require significant resources. In addition, they face many other responsibilities for which additional funds are needed, including: improving monitoring and emission inventories of toxic air pollution; increasing the frequency of inspections of sources; reducing hazardous air pollutants; expanding criteria pollutant monitoring; improving risk assessment capacity; reducing concentrations of fine particulates; increasing public education efforts; improving small business compliance assistance; purchasing replacements for equipment that has outgrown its expected usage; and improve modeling tools to determine emission reductions needed.

In conclusion, federal grants to state and local air quality agencies are vastly inadequate. Without additional federal grants, state and local air agencies will find it increasingly difficult to obtain and maintain healthful air quality. Accordingly, we recommend an increase of \$100 million above the President's FY 2005 request for grants to state and local air quality agencies.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.