

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2024

The Honorable Michael Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Michael G. Whitaker
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Regan and Administrator Whitaker:

We write today to urge that you move swiftly ahead on efforts to protect communities and ban the use of leaded aviation gasoline. We celebrate EPA's recent finalization of its endangerment finding for leaded aviation gasoline. For decades, impacted communities have known of the harms that this damaging neurotoxin cause to the human body and have been calling for an end to the use of this dangerous fuel. The finalized endangerment finding represents a major step forward in addressing the largest unregulated source of lead emissions and largest source of airborne lead emissions in the country,¹ but the work is not done yet.

As EPA's endangerment finding makes clear, lead can cause irreversible, life-long health effects, particularly for children. This is especially poignant for the 5 million people and more than 360,000 children under the age of five who live near one of the 20,000 airports where piston-engine aircrafts operate.² Lead poisoning due to leaded aviation gasoline is a crisis affecting communities nationwide. In 2021, a watershed study found that children living in affected communities near the Reid-Hillview Airport in Santa Clara County had blood lead level increases higher than the children living in Flint, Michigan during the peak of the Flint water crisis.³ Since this study was released, Santa Clara County has moved to ban the sale of leaded aviation gasoline at their airports, but pilots are still able to fly to neighboring airports, fill their planes up with leaded fuels, and continue to expose the nearby communities. Federal leadership is essential to comprehensively and effectively curb these emissions.

The transition to unleaded fuel will not only protect these communities, but it will also be beneficial to pilots and their airplanes too. Unleaded fuels lead to less frequent oil changes, extended lifespans of spark plugs, and other benefits to the operations of piston engine aircrafts. Last year, FAA approved the first 100 octane unleaded fuel for fleetwide use as a drop-in replacement for 100 octane low lead. We anticipate more unleaded fuels to achieve standard approval in the coming year. It is possible for us to begin phasing out the use of leaded fuels now and we must act with the urgency that this issue demands.

Now that the EPA has finalized its endangerment finding for leaded aviation gasoline, under the Clean Air Act section 7571(a)(2), the EPA must set emissions standards applicable to lead air pollution from piston-engine

¹ Transp. Rsch. Bd., Nat'l Acads. of Scis., Eng'g, & Med. et al., Options for Reducing Lead Emissions from PistonEngine Aircraft 46 (2021), <https://www.nap.edu/read/26050/chapter/5>.

² United States Environmental Protection Agency, National Analysis of the Populations Residing Near or Attending School Near U.S. Airports (2020), <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/P100YG4A.PDF?Dockey=P100YG4A.PDF>.

³ Mountain Data Group, Leaded Aviation Gasoline Exposure Risk at Reid-Hillview Airport in Santa Clara County, California (2021), <https://files.santaclaracounty.gov/migrated/RHV-Airborne-Lead-Study-Report.pdf>.

aircraft and consult with the FAA on aircraft engine emission standards.⁴ Relatedly, per 49 USC § 44714, the FAA is required to set standards for aircraft fuel to control or eliminate emissions that the EPA has determined endanger public health or welfare.⁵

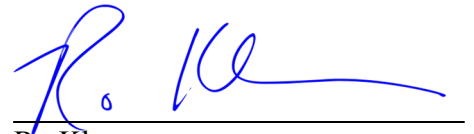
It is incumbent on the EPA and FAA to seize this moment and move forward with regulations that ensure children and impacted communities nationwide are protected from leaded aviation gasoline. Communities have waited for far too long to breathe air clear of lead. Already, airports, local, and state elected officials are taking up the mantle and working to end the use of leaded aviation gasoline well before the 2030 timeline set by the EAGLE initiative,⁶ but they cannot do this alone. Every day that passes without critical federal standards and regulations is another day that children across the nation are exposed to lead. The Biden Administration must continue to make good on their promise to tackle the lead crisis and advance environmental justice by quickly and safely phasing out the use of leaded aviation gasoline.

We thank you for your work and look forward to working with the EPA and FAA on this crucial issue.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

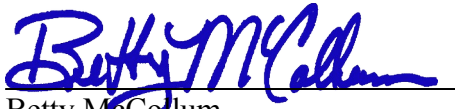


Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

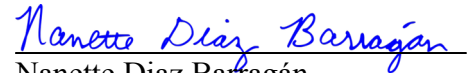
⁴ 42 U.S. Code § 7571(a)(2) reads: “The Administrator shall, from time to time, issue proposed emission standards applicable to the emission of any air pollutant from any class or classes of aircraft engines which in his judgment causes, or contributes to, air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare.”

⁵ 49 U.S. Code § 44714 reads: “The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall prescribe—
(1) standards for the composition or chemical or physical properties of an aircraft fuel or fuel additive to control or eliminate aircraft emissions the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency decides under section 231 of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7571) endanger the public health or welfare; and
(2) regulations providing for carrying out and enforcing those standards.”

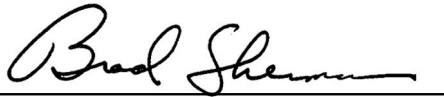
⁶ In addition to the work done in Santa Clara County, see also recent efforts to curb leaded aviation gasoline emissions at the [Long Beach Airport in California](#), at the [Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport in Jefferson County, Colorado](#), and across the [state of Washington](#), for example.



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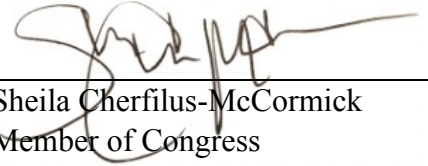
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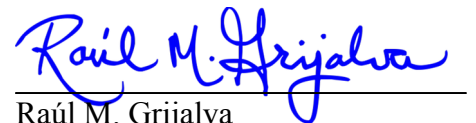
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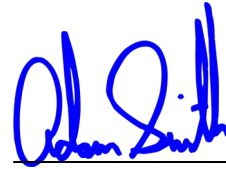
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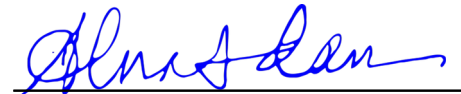
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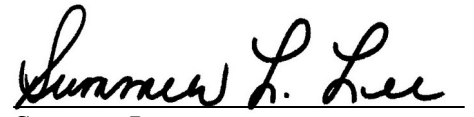
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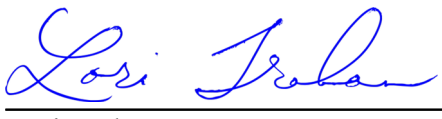
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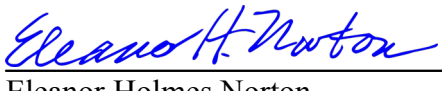
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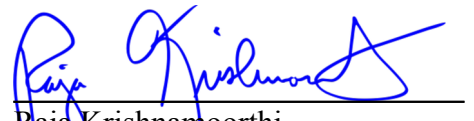
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