Michigan and our nation are undergoing a change in the electrical power generation for our homes and businesses, from outdated dirty coal plants to clean energy sources like wind and solar. This change will bring huge health benefits and stimulate economic growth. It is important to make sure that the economic benefits of clean energy are felt by all Michiganders and especially by environmental justice communities impacted by pollution and in need of jobs and by workers affected by coal plant closures. It is also important to make sure that environmental justice communities do not suffer increased pollution as this transition occurs.

Federal and state policies can influence whether the benefits of clean energy are enjoyed by Michigan’s communities and workers in greatest need. Michigan will develop a state plan to meet the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) first ever limits on carbon pollution from power plants, set out in the Clean Power Plan. Federal and state policymakers must hear from Michigan residents so that Michigan’s plan reflects the needs of community members.

**INCREASED POLLUTION RISK**

The transition from outdated coal plants will happen in many places and take different forms across Michigan — from weatherization of homes to making industries more energy efficient to building more wind farms and installing solar panels. It is likely that utilities will also invest in additional polluting facilities such as new natural gas plants. It is important that environmental justice communities are involved in planning this transition. By working with state leaders, EJ communities can make sure that a state energy plan does not cause harm and instead provides health and economic benefits.

**HEALTH BENEFITS FROM CLEAN ENERGY**

Coal plants are responsible for high levels of toxic air pollution in the communities around them. The Environmental Protection Agency has designated large sectors of two counties in Michigan, Wayne and St. Clair, as having sulfur dioxide pollution that exceeds safe levels for human health. In both Wayne and St. Clair counties, it is the local coal plants that contribute by far the greatest percentage of sulfur dioxide pollution making these areas unsafe. In addition, coal
plants emit large amounts of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and mercury. Coal plant pollution is a major contributor to asthma, emphysema, bronchitis and can aggravate existing heart disease.

The transition away from coal will result in major health improvements, especially in environmental justice communities that are impacted by coal plant pollution. The Environmental Protection Agency has found that closure of coal plants nationwide over the next 14 years will prevent 3,600 death, 1,700 heart attacks, 90,000 asthma attacks and 300,000 missed workdays and school days.

Transitioning from coal to cleaner energy will reduce carbon dioxide emissions that lead to a reduction in climate change impacts. As climate change worsens, communities of color and low income will face rising food prices, increased water scarcity and weather related crises. For example, over 400,000 people in Toledo Ohio were without water for days in 2014 when excessive warm weather fueled growth of a toxin in Lake Erie, the city’s source for drinking water.

**JOBS POTENTIAL**

As states transition to clean energy, thousands of new jobs will be created. Michigan will need people working to reduce energy waste by weatherizing homes and businesses. New wind farms will be developed and solar panels will be placed on homes and businesses. In addition to installing new technologies, it is possible for Michigan to be a center for the production of parts for the wind, solar and energy efficiency industries. The Economic Policy Institute a non-profit policy organization that works to include the needs of low-income and middle class workers in economic policy decisions predicts that the Clean Power Plan will create 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

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