EANY SUPPORTS

Clearing the Toxic Air

Memo #56

S.4371-D (Biaggi, et al.) A.6150-B (Septimo, et al.)

Explanation:
This bill directs the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to establish air quality standards for toxic air contaminants, while requiring enhanced air monitoring by major stationary sources of pollution located in or adjacent to a disadvantaged community.

Exposure to toxic air pollution can have serious health implications, including links to various forms of cancer, cardiovascular and pulmonary disease, damage to the nervous system and brain, birth defects, and increased mortality. Major stationary sources of air pollution are often concentrated in environmental justice communities and the impacts of these contaminants are also exacerbated by high concentrations of vehicular traffic.

This legislation helps address the disproportionate impacts contaminated and dirty air has on disadvantaged communities. We have seen that those living in communities with the worst air quality have a greater likelihood of dying from COVID-19 infection than those living where air is cleaner. By requiring polluters operating in and adjacent to environmental justice communities to monitor and report on cumulative levels of toxic air contaminants at the fence line, as opposed to just the source, host communities will have a greater understanding of air pollution levels they are being exposed to and the DEC will have the tools needed to mitigate the impacts in environmental justice communities.

Summary:
This bill requires the DEC to establish ambient air quality standards for toxic air contaminants emitted by major stationary sources of air pollution. The covered contaminants include benzene, formaldehyde, vinyl chloride, polychlorinated dibenzodioxins, polychlorinated dibenzofurans, trichloroethylene, and mercury. The legislation also contemplates the use of fence line air monitoring for major sources located in or adjacent to environmental justice communities.

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