November 07, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

Ann Phillips, Rear Admiral, USN (Ret), Maritime Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20528

Admiral Karl Schultz, Commandant U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20528

RE: Health Professional's Concerns Regarding Health and Environmental Impacts of Deepwater Port Fossil Fuel Applications that Undercut National Interest and Administration Priorities to Address Climate Change

Dear Secretary Buttigieg, Secretary Mayorkas, Administrator Phillips and Commandant Schultz:

We, the undersigned health professionals, submit this letter to convey concerns regarding the application for the Sea Port Oil Terminal (SPOT), a deepwater port terminal off the coast of Texas, related pipelines, and the subsequent transport of massive quantities of crude oil and fracked gas from the Permian Basin. The Biden-Harris administration is in a critical moment for climate policy solutions that are grounded at the foundation in the best available scientific understanding of climate change risks, impacts and solutions. Health professionals have a critical perspective on decision-making regarding climate policy, bringing unique first hand experiences, expert knowledge, and a core mission to protect health and wellbeing.

Climate change is a proven threat to human health, connected to increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease, injuries and premature deaths related to extreme weather events and extreme heat, changes in the prevalence and geographical distribution of food- and water-borne illnesses and other infectious diseases, and increased mental health risks.[1] The Department of

[1] Centers for Disease Control (CDC): Climate Effects on Health https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/

Transportation (DOT) acknowledged the existential climate crisis in a Climate Action Plan released in August 2021, which included policies to accelerate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector and make our transportation infrastructure more resilient to climate change impacts.[2] In addition to those commitments, the Department of Transportation must continue to protect public health by not approving new oil and gas infrastructure. Any new fossil fuel infrastructure locks the U.S. into decades of new emissions and moves us further away from meeting the Biden-Harris Administration's climate change goals, including the national target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The development of new oil and gas infrastructure not only exacerbates global climate impacts, but harms the health of nearby communities. Today, more than 17 million U.S. residents live within a half-mile of an oil or gas well or facility[3]. Toxins from hundreds of chemicals and pollutants, the creation and storage of toxic waste, and the constant noise and light that exist around operations present scientifically-established health concerns for nearby residents.[4]

That is why we are especially concerned about the Sea Port Oil Terminal (SPOT), as well as five additional Deepwater Port applications[5] under consideration of the Maritime Administration, an agency of Secretary Buttigeig's DOT. Collectively, these projects would vastly expand U.S. oil and gas exports, impacting residents who already live alongside a massive number of polluting industrial and fossil fuel facilities. With projections of slowing global demand for crude,[6] these projects come entirely at the expense of our climate, frontline communities, and Gulf Coast ecosystems.

If built, the Sea Port Oil Terminal would load Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs), the largest tankers on Earth, at a rate of 85,000 barrels an hour, or 2 million barrels per day. This would move more crude oil annually than is currently produced on all Gulf Coast offshore drilling platforms.[7] The oil would create combined upstream and downstream emissions of 232,975,297 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year[8] and increase toxic air pollutants like benzene, a known carcinogen.[9] Furthermore, oil is the largest industrial source of emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which contribute to harmful ozone and smog. Exposure to ground-level ozone can cause asthma and is linked to increased emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and premature death. In light of current ozone levels onshore, the EPA has taken

---

[2] U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of the Secretary of Transportation. Climate Action Plan. August 2021.
[3] Oil and Gas Threat Map http://oilandgasthreatmap.com/
[4] Gonzales, David J.X. et al., "Upstream oil and gas production and ambient air pollution in California," Science of The Total Environment,Vol. 806. 2022. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.150298.
[5] Maritime Administration, Pending Applications for Deepwater Port, 2022.
<https://www.maritime.dot.gov/ports/deepwater-ports-and-licensing/pending-applications>
[6] S&P Global Commodity Insights, "World oil demand growth 'continues to lose momentum,' IEA says, trimming 2022 estimate," September 14, 2022; Business Today, Crude oil prices edge up as supply woes outweigh demand; Brent hits $92/bbl, September 20, 2022.
[7] Maritime Administration, Pending Applications for Deepwater Port, 2022.
[8] U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Sea Port Oil Terminal Deepwater Port Project, Appendix BB: SPOT Deepwater Port Greenhouse Gas Emission Calculations, 2022.
[9] Environmental Protection Agency, "Benzene," (2016) https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-09/documents/benzene.pdf

steps to redesignate the Houston area a “severe” nonattainment zone, up from its previous status as “severe.”[10]

Additionally, transportation of crude oil from the Sea Port Oil Terminal would increase the risk of methane emissions and oil leaks and spills. Toxic chemicals from oil spills can have serious short- and long-term health effects on those exposed, including oil workers, nearby residents, marine life, and the surrounding habitat. Additionally, related chemical reactions, fumes, and possible fires after an oil spill can further harm health. Communities exposed to oil spills experience dizziness, headaches, nausea, coughing and lung problems, skin irritation, and memory loss[11]. Oil contamination from the Deepwater Horizon disaster is still impacting coastal communities and has been associated with potential for increases in harmful algal blooms and numbers of pathogenic Vibrio bacteria in oil-impacted water[12]. Long-term health effects of oil spill exposure include increased cancer risk, reproductive issues, and decreased immunity.[13]

Crude oil and fracked gas, along with any associated infrastructure, is dangerous to surrounding communities and poses a health risk. The explosion that occurred on June 8th at Texas’s Freeport LNG export facility exemplifies the concerns community members have repeatedly expressed around the expansion of fossil fuel exports, more broadly, from the US. This explosion, along with community members’ concern for oil spills, economic instability, and environmental justice show that building out even more fossil fuel export infrastructure cannot continue.

Fossil fuel refineries and export facilities present dangers to both workers and nearby residents. For example, in August 2021, Cheniere Energy was issued a $2.2 million fine when the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration found several severe cracks in storage tanks at the Sabine Pass LNG export facility just across Sabine Lake from the Port Arthur community.[14] PHMSA found that the cracks were a result of “incorrect operations" and “inadequate tank design” for the operations at Sabine Pass LNG. These conditions could have created a flammable cloud of low-lying gas that would have gathered around the tanks. In addition to unsafe tank designs, PHMSA found that Cheniere didn’t have alarms properly set to warn of hazardous conditions that could have prevented the cracks from happening in the first place.

---

[10] Environmental Protection Agency, 40 CFR Parts 52 and 81: Determinations of Attainment by the Attainment Date, Extensions of the Attainment Date, and Reclassification of Areas Classified as Serious for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards , September 15, 2022.

[11] Aguilera F, Méndez J, Pásaro E, Laffon B (2010) Review on the effects of exposure to spilled oils on human health Journal of Applied Toxicology 30:291-301 doi:10.1002/jat.1521

[12] Eklund, R. L., Knapp, L. C., Sandifer, P. A., & Colwell, R. C. (2019). Oil Spills and Human Health: Contributions of the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative. GeoHealth, 3, 391– 406. https://doi.org/10.1029/2019GH000217

[13] Frontiers in Public Health: “The Development of Long-Term Adverse Health Effects in Oil Spill Cleanup Workers of the Deepwater Horizon Offshore Drilling Rig Disaster.”

[14] Dick, Jacob, “Cheniere fined $2.2 million related to cracks,” Houston Chronicle ,Aug. 13, 2021

Additionally, on June 8, a failure at the Freeport LNG gas export facility caused an explosion that created a 450-feet-high fireball[15]. The explosion happened along a 700-foot section of pipe where LNG had become trapped, causing pressure to build. That section that had reportedly been inspected several weeks earlier, according to a report. The health and safety risks of building oil and gas infrastructure are high and especially concerning when existing facilities have a record of failing to prevent emissions and potential catastrophic explosions.

The Sea Port Oil Terminal and the five additional proposed deepwater port terminals planned for the Gulf Coast pose an immediate health hazard by contributing to the vast and varied health impacts of climate change at large, while contributing to local health impacts by harming important food sources, increasing air pollution, and creating devastating oil spills. The Transportation Secretary and Maritime Administrator have the responsibility to act in the public interest by preventing the environmental injustice that would ensue if the SPOT project were to be approved. As health professionals, we encourage a rapid and just transition from extractive harmful energy systems to clean, just renewable energy and urge Secretary Buttigegig and Admiral Phillips to deny licenses for deepwater ports to export oil and gas.

CC:
White House National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi
White House Science Advisor Francis Collins
Special Climate Envoy John Kerry
Lieutenant General Scott Spellmon, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Administrator
Administrator Michael Regan, Environmental Protection Agency
David Garcia, P.E., Region 6 Air and Radiation Division
Secretary Gina M. Raimondo, U.S. Department of Commerce
Secretary Deb Haaland, U.S. Department of Interior
Director Amanda Lefton, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Director Martha Williams, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Nicole R. LeBoeuf Assistant Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Assistant Administrator Janet Coit, National Marine Fisheries Service
Ambassador Katherine C. Tai, U.S. Trade Representative

Signed,

1. Citizens for Clean Air/Water in Brazoria, Melanie Oldham, Founder
2. 10 Votes
3. 350 New Hampshire
4. 350 Pensacola

[15] Chapa, Sergio. "Freeport LNG Blast Created 450-Feet-High Fireball, Report Shows." Bloomberg. June 12, 2022.

5. Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
6. Between the Waters
7. Between the Waters - Peggy Ann Berry PhD, Executive Director
8. Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
9. California Nurses for Environmental Health and Justice
10. Chapel Hill Organization for Clean Energy
11. CleanEarth4Kids.org
12. Concerned Health Professionals of New York
13. Concerned Health Professionals of Pennsylvania
14. George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication
15. Go Green Team of Stockton, Missouri
16. Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate
17. Illinois Association of School Nurses (IASN) - Gloria E. Barrera, Past President
18. Larysa Dyrszka, MD, co-founder, Concerned Health Professionals of New York
19. Martha Peragine Berger, Climate Equity Collaborative
20. Moms for a Nontoxic New York
21. North American Climate, Conservation and Environment(NACCE)
22. NYU Langone Health - Jill Aquino, Community Coordinator,
23. Oncology Nursing Society
24. Our Revolution Ocean County, NJ - Joni Brennan Co-Chair
25. Physicians for Social Responsibility - New York
26. Protect All Children's Environment - Elizabeth O'Nan, Director
27. PSR Arizona
28. Rachel Carson Council
29. San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
30. San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
31. Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
32. Terra Advocati
33. Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility
34. The Enviro Show
35. Vote Climate
36. Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
37. Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action

38. Alan Peterson MD
39. Alasia Ledford
40. Alex Fay, BSN, RN
41. Alex Kim, MPH
42. Anna Valdez, PhD, RN, FAEN, FAADN
43. Annemarie Dooley MD
44. Barbara Sattler, RN, DrPH, FAAN
45. Barbara W. Brandom, MD
46. Barbara Warren, MD, MPH
47. Barton Schoenfeld, MD, FACC
48. Breck Lebegue MD MPH
49. Brenna Doheny, PhD, MPH
50. Bruce Snyder MD
51. Carmi Orenstein, MPH
52. Carol E McDonald
53. Cassandra Rosswog RN, BSN
54. Catherine Dodd PhD RN
55. Chaplain Carrie Roach
56. Chris Covert-Bowlds, MD
57. Christie Torres DNP, APRN
58. Christina Rogers, RN
59. Christy Haas-Howard, MPH, RN
60. Claire Richards, PhD, RN
61. Cynthia M. Reid
62. Danielle C. Johnson, RN
63. Daphne Chakurian
64. David Hunter, MD
65. Deborah Moscufo-Barner, RN, MSN Ed
66. Diane E. Anderson, Registered Nurse retired
67. Don Lieber, Surgical Technologist
68. Dr Sandra Adams
69. Dr. Anne Ness
70. Dr. Eric T. Riebsomer

71. Dr. Janet Katz, RN, PhD, FAAN
72. Dr. Laura Anderko PhD RN
73. Dr. Peggy Slota
74. Dr. Sherry Knoppers
75. Dr. Susan Penner
76. Duaba Bohn, MS
77. Edward Maibach, MPH, PhD
78. Elaine Jasper-Blake, BSN, RN
79. Elizabeth Keech PhD, RN
80. Emily Little, RN, MSN
81. Emmanuel C Tedjasukmana, RN
82. Erin Johnson, RN
83. Eve Shapiro, MD
84. Fran P Aguirre, MS
85. Gibran Mancus, PhD, MSN, RN
86. Gloria E. Barrera, MSN, RN, PEL-CSN
87. Hannah Myers, RN, BSN
88. Heidi Adelsman, RN
89. Indra D. Kundzins RN, BSN
90. Jacquelyn King
91. James M Deshotels
92. Jane Kedenburg
93. Janice Dunne, RN
94. Jennifer Harlos, RN
95. Jermika Kennedy, RN
96. Jessica Edwards, DO
97. Jessica LeClair, Nurse Educator
98. Jill D. Aquino, RN, MS
99. Joni Brennan
100. Karen Berger
101. Karen Carini, NP
102. Karen May, Ph.D., RN, CNE
103. Katherine Hahn, MOT, OTR

104. Katherine Slama, Ph.D.
105. Katheryn Cortes, RN
106. Kathie Westman
107. Kathleen Nolan, MD, MSL
108. Kathleen Schuler, MPH
109. Kathleen Wardell, RN
110. Kathleen Whitefield, RN , BSN, PHN
111. Kathryn Iverson
112. Kathy Lynn Reiner, MPH, BA, BSN, RN, AE-C
113. Kathy Sokola, EdD, RN, CNE
114. Kathy Ware, RN, MSN, CRNP
115. Katie Distin, RN, MSNED
116. Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN
117. Kelly Martin-Vegue, RN, MSW
118. Kent Boyd RN, PHN
119. Kristen Heldmann, APRN
120. Kristin Storheim, RN
121. L. Szepanski
122. Larysa Dyrszka, MD
123. Lauren Reichard, BSN, RN
124. Linda Halcon, PhD, MPH, RN
125. Linda Riazi Kermani, RN
126. Lindsey Hill RN, DNP FNP Student
127. Lisa Doggett, MD, MPH
128. Lisa Manning, RN
129. Liz Mizelle, RN
130. Lora Colten, RN BSN
131. Lori Simmons, BSW, MBA
132. Lucinda Cave MSN RN
133. Martha Peragine Berger, Director of Children's Health, Climate Equity Collaborative
134. Mary Ann Gonzales, MD, GARP, PLLC
135. Mary Reilly, NP
136. Megan Slade, LMHC

137. Melanie Oldham PT
138. Melanie Schimpf, RN
139. Monica Harmon, PHN
140. Mr. Jerry Rivers, Environmental Scientist-Activist
141. Mrs. Virginia M. Rosen, RN, BSN
142. Ms. Melanie Hutton, Administrator RN-MSN
143. Nancy Chaney, RN (ret), MS
144. Nina Juntereal, BSN, RN
145. Olivia Prebus, MSN RN
146. Pamela Levin, PhD, RN
147. Pat Mclaine, RNz
148. Patrice Sutton, MPH
149. Paul Wilson LCSW-R
150. Paula Bizot, MS, RN
151. Peggy Ann Berry PhD, MSN, RN COHN-S,. SAAOHN
152. Rachel Howard, RN, FNP
153. Rick Cheeseman
154. Robert K. Musil, P.H.D., M.P.H.
155. Robert M. Gould, MD
156. Roberta Cassidy, Associate Professor, Planetary Health Nurse
157. Robin Evans-Agnew
158. Robyn Gilden, PhD, RN, Associate Professor
159. Ruth McDermott-Levy, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN
160. Ryne Wilson, DNP, RN, OCN
161. Sahar Nouredini, PhD, RN, CNS
162. SallyMelcher-McKeagney, RN
163. Sandra Olanitori, MS, RN
164. Sandra Steingraber, PhD, Science and Environmental Health Network
165. Sara Kramer MSN, RN
166. Sara Markle-Elder
167. Sarah Bucic, RN
168. Sarah J Clark
169. Shanda Demorest, DNP, RN, PHN

170. Shirley C. Gordon, RN
171. Sister Joan Agro
172. Susan G. Williams, Associate Professor of Nursing, University of South Alabama
173. Susan Way, CNM, WHNP-BC
174. Suzanne Carroll, RN, MS, AOCN
175. Suzanne Hume, Educational Director and Founder, CleanEarth4Kids.org
176. Suzanne Jacobson,MSN
177. Sydney Engel, FNP
178. Taran Green, RN, BSN, PHN
179. Taryn Edwards, MSN, APRN, NNP-BC
180. Ted Schettler MD, MPH
181. Teddie Potter PhD, RN, FAAN, FNAP
182. Timothy Edward Duda, Director, Terra Advocati
183. Tommie Farrell, RN
184. William Campos, RN