



LONG BEACH ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN WITH ASTHMA



Senator Barbara Boxer, Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

I am writing on behalf of the Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma (LBACA) and the many children whose asthma is triggered daily by breathing dirty air from ocean going vessels. As a broad based community asthma coalition, LBACA works to improve the health and well being of asthmatic children in communities adjacent to the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles through both clinical interventions, but also through policy changes related to outdoor air pollution by educating community members to share their story of the "on the ground" impacts that air pollution from port operations has on their health. These communities are inundated with pollution sources from the entire goods movement system, however, it is the highly pollution marine vessels which we understand most impact our children's health. In an effort to advocate for curbing pollution from these sources, LBACA moms testified at the California Air Resources Board meeting in December of 2005 wherein regulations were considered, and subsequently passed, regarding the sulfur content of auxiliary engine fuel in ocean going vessels. During the hearing, the heavy industry opposition made clear to our community members that in order to successfully decrease pollution from these sources we must pass national, and even international, regulations to dramatically curb pollution from marine vessels if we are ever able to protect the health of our children.

Representing thousands of mothers like herself, one of our community leaders, Martha Cota, has included a statement of her experience of living near the ports. With pollution from trucks, trains and marine vessels belching into her community, Martha understands firsthand what results from a lack of oversight and regulation. After two of her sons were diagnosed with asthma, she became active in the community of Long Beach, working to raise awareness about the dangers of the disease and urging local lawmakers to act to curb air pollution in the area. Martha, who was also recently diagnosed with asthma, recalls one of many frightening visits to the emergency room when her son Jose, then only four years old, struggled to breathe.

"We were rushing him to the hospital by car and it is really sad to see your son almost die because he cannot breathe. His lips and all of his body turned purple," Martha says. "If people and the politicians knew how it feels, they would cry with the mothers of children with asthma."

Not only has asthma affected Martha emotionally, as she watches her sons suffer, it has also impacted her children's education and her family's financial situation. "They have to miss school when they are sick and I have to miss work to be in the emergency room," she says. "It's very difficult. It has affected me in every way."

Martha believes the air pollution problem in Long Beach and other areas adjacent to the San Pedro Bay Ports is getting worse, which makes something as simple as breathing, a very difficult task for her and her children. "Strong, windy days are the worst, because the air carries all those particles from the ports' trucks, ships and even the train stations. It's all due to the diesel engines," she says. "The polluted air begins to congest my chest, then my eyes get watery and I'm an adult! Imagine how it affects children!"

Martha thinks immigrant families are badly affected by the air pollution problem because many live in poorer neighborhoods closest to the ports. In honor of the families suffering from not only asthma, but other health problems, we strongly support any of your efforts to curb this pollution source through legislation. To show our support, Martha and I plan to attend your legislative hearing in Los Angeles, and look forward to any opportunities to collaborate or offer our continued support for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Elina Green, MPH  
Project Manager  
Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma

Martha Cota  
Mother of Children with Asthma  
Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma

Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma  
2651 Elm Ave. Suite 100 Long Beach, CA 90806  
(562) 427-4249 \* Fax (562) 427-8438  
[www.lbaca.org](http://www.lbaca.org)