PRESS STATEMENT

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MOMS CLEAN AIR FORCE ISSUES STATEMENT ABOUT PETROCHEMICAL FIRES IN TEXAS

Two industrial fires recently sent thick plumes of black smoke into the air over the Houston area, putting the health and well-being of families at risk. Officials ordered people to shelter in place because of elevated levels of benzene, a known carcinogen. Schools closed. Mothers rushed to mobile clinics to get health screenings for their children. Babies in the womb, infants and children are especially vulnerable to air pollution because their bodies are still developing and pollution exposures can cause asthma attacks, respiratory problems, and even cancer.

“The petrochemical industry poses a significant health and safety threat especially to communities and the children that are located the closest to the facilities. It is concerning that young lungs have been breathing the air near these chemical fires. Additionally, elevated levels of benzene had been measured in Deer Park and there are no safe level of benzene exposure for children and pregnant women. Benzene is a potent neurotoxin and known to cause cancer, specifically, childhood leukemia. The protection of children, families, and communities needs to be paramount,” said Heather McTeer Toney, National Field Director for Moms Clean Air Force.

“Parents cannot control the air their children breathe and depend on their leaders and state agencies to protect children who don't yet have a voice to speak up for themselves. Parents raise their children in these communities expecting to do so in a healthy and safe environment – and not next to industrial sources polluting the air and posing serious health and safety risks,” said Dee Dee Belmares, Texas Field Consultant for Moms Clean Air Force.

A black cloud will remain over Houston as long as elected leaders and government agencies accept chemical fires and explosions, rogue pollution releases and shelter-in-place orders as the cost of living here. Our families need the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality to enforce clean air standards, protect people's health and be transparent to overcome the current crisis of confidence in the agency. Moms Clean Air Force supports meaningful and robust enforcements to protect air, water, and public health.

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Moms Clean Air Force is a community of more than 1,000,000 moms—and dads—working together to combat air pollution, including the urgent crisis of our changing climate, for the sake of our children’s health.