

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 13, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

As you develop new grant eligibility criteria for FY2020 federal grants, we urge you to provide federal assistance to replace the most polluting vehicles in current service. This support is particularly useful in low-income areas where vehicles are used well beyond their anticipated usefulness. Many of these communities already struggle with poor air quality and the corresponding public health impacts.

In 2005, as part of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, Congress enacted the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA), which was most recently revised in 2010. Over the past decade, DERA has provided help to retrofit and replace more than 73,000 vehicles, engines, and other pieces of equipment. The program has reduced emissions and prevented more 14,700 tons of particulate matter and 335,200 tons of nitrogen oxides from being released into the air. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that in 2016, that DERA prevented up to 1,700 premature deaths.

DERA investments have been important to many regions in the United States. In California, these funds have been useful across the state. Though we have made significant progress, much work remains to be done. Many areas of California still struggle with poor air quality and DERA assistance is an essential part of the solution, both in urban and rural areas.

Unfortunately, the eligibility requirements for recent DERA grants excluded assistance in some areas that may need it most. For example, in the agriculturally rich San Joaquin Valley, many farmers still use and maintain older equipment and diesel yard trucks for farm duty. According to the California Air Resources Board, the average age of an agricultural tractor is 27 years, which equates to model year 1992. For many farmers, replacing these trucks and equipment with more fuel efficient and less polluting models is cost prohibitive. However, under last year's DERA eligibility requirements, vehicles and engines with model years before 1996 were not eligible. The extremely old vehicles currently in use across the Central Valley are generally more polluting than more modern vehicles and replacing them will have a disproportionate impact on air quality.

Often, the communities with the most polluting vehicles are the ones with the least ability to replace them. In the Central Valley for example, the neighboring Kern, Kings, and Fresno Counties were all recently ranked in the top 5 counties with the most air pollution in the nation by the American Lung Association. Those same counties all struggle with high concentrations of poverty with poverty rates of 21.2%, 18.4%, and 21.1% respectively. This is an area where the health risks are the greatest and without federal support, local communities are unable to afford replacing their dirty vehicles.

DERA has been – and will continue to be – an important tool for reducing air pollution. We urge that in next year’s grant cycle vehicles that are older than the previous cut-off and are operated in high-pollution, low-income areas be eligible for federal DERA grants.

Sincerely,



JIM COSTA  
Member of Congress



KAMALA D. HARRIS  
United States Senator

DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator



TJ COX  
Member of Congress



JOSH HARDER  
Member of Congress