



October 8, 2015

Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary
Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
251 Causeway St.,
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Secretary Beaton,

Groundwork Lawrence (GWL) has been making change happen in the Greater Lawrence area since its beginnings in 1999. Through its environmental and open space improvements, healthy food access programs, education and employment initiatives, community programming and events, GWL creates the building blocks of a healthy community, and empowers residents to improve their quality of life. Our mission is to bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement and management of the physical environment by developing community-based partnerships which empower people, businesses and organizations to promote environmental, economic and social well-being

GWL is dedicated to working on environmental and social justice issues, with a focus on eliminating health inequities, and we thank EEA for its ongoing partnership. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Environmental Justice Policy, as part of Executive Order 552. As a member of the MA EJ Alliance, we support the comments and red-lined documents submitted by ACE. We also support the verbal comments provided to EEA during the two listening sessions held in Lawrence, hosted by Groundwork Lawrence (August 27 and September 23).

A few key items that we'd like to highlight include:

- Coordination with DPH, other departments on public health opportunities: we request that the policy include an expansion of EEA's public health efforts beyond sources of pollution to include prevention and the elimination of health disparities. EEA's investments in the Economy and Open Space are playing a major role in combatting obesity and diet-related disease and the EJ policy should ensure coordination with DPH initiatives like Mass in Motion and the Prevention and Wellness Trust.
- Removing childhood cancer and adding other criteria: as highlighted by ACE, childhood cancers are statistically rare. Rates of obesity or asthma would serve as better identifiers. In addition, looking at neighborhoods that are food deserts or with 25% of families dealing with food insecurity would then provide an avenue for coordination with DTA and DAR, as well as DPH to eliminate health inequities.
- Public Outreach, alternative media and information outlets: in addition to including social media (ex: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) community web portals (web sites) should be utilized. For example, Social Capital, Inc. has built partnerships with many EJ communities including Lawrence, Dorchester, Chelsea, Lynn, Fall River, and New Bedford. In addition, requiring that these community partners are notified during the times of required community engagement including permitting processes and the design of large publicly funded projects.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to submit comments on the draft EJ Policy. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

Heather McMann, Executive Director