

Environmental Justice Ordinance

Testimony to Cincinnati City Council

June 16, 2009

Members of City Council:

My name is Tony Stieritz. I direct the Catholic Social Action Office at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and I'm here in support of environmental justice.

Echoing the teaching of our popes, the U.S. bishops in their pastoral statement, *Renewing the Earth*, stated that "the option for the poor embedded in the Gospel and the Church's teaching makes us aware that the poor suffer most directly from environmental decline and have the least access to relief from their suffering". Therefore, among other efforts in response, the bishops have supported the advancement of the U.S. President's 1994 Executive Order 12898, which is identified in the language of this ordinance, as it directs federal agencies to develop strategies for environmental justice.

While the Catholic Social Action Office isn't advocating for any particular prescription for how environmental justice can be achieved locally, we believe that this effort discussed today should move forward. I'm here to ask that you please don't let the years of hard for better air quality go up in smoke.

Our office has worked with minority and low-income community groups and our own parishioners, living near numerous air polluting industries. We have taken to heart their experiences dealing with cancer, respiratory illnesses, noxious odors, and loss of plant

and animal life in the area. In addition, we're concerned about the greater harm air pollution and toxins are having on their children, born and unborn.

For these folks and for all of us living in the city, we need something that gives a sense of greater security, more information and citizen participation related to the cumulative impacts of air pollution. Although they've done a lot for us, I don't believe that current federal and state EPA regulations have been able to provide this. We all deserve healthier air.

Thank you.

Thank you

On top of that, speaking as a citizen of the city, I know that I would also appreciate the greater amount of information and citizen participation over air quality in my community that this ordinance provides. Overall, this environmental justice effort makes Cincinnati a better place to live for all.

The CSA Office, which does its best to stand in solidarity with those who are working for justice in their communities, stands with them today as they demand environmental justice, a greater feeling of security that there will be some protection if another industry adds additional pollutants to the air that will end up in their lungs.