



Jersey Renews Press Conference

Statement by:

Bernie Gerard, HPAE Vice President

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Good morning, my name is Bernie Gerard, Vice-President of HPAE, the state's largest union of healthcare workers.

As healthcare professionals, we witness the devastating impacts of pollution on the health of New Jerseyans from chronic respiratory ailments to life threatening cancers. Reducing emissions in New Jersey can go a long way to prevent illness and reduce the need for costly and long term treatments.

Poor air quality is linked to premature death, cancer, and long-term damage to respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Progress has been made to reduce unhealthy air emissions, but, in 2008, approximately 127 million people lived in U.S. counties that exceeded national air quality standards. Decreasing air pollution is an important step in creating a healthy environment.

Children are not little adults—their bodies are not the same as adult bodies. Because they are small and still developing, they are more easily exposed to environmental contaminants and here's why:

- Children breathe more air, drink more water, and eat more food per pound of body weight than adults.
- Children are more likely to put their hands in their mouth.
- A child's body may not be able to break down and get rid of harmful contaminants that enter their body.
- Health problems from an environmental exposure can take years to develop. Because they are young, children have more time to develop health conditions and diseases than adults who are exposed later in their life.

Much about how the environment can affect our health is unknown. What we do know is that environmental hazard exposure can affect a child's growth and development.

HPAE supports the Jersey Renews agenda to ensure our state moves in the right direction to protect the health and safety of future generations by reducing harmful emissions and promoting renewable energy initiatives.

*HPAE is the largest union of registered nurses and health care professionals in New Jersey. Since its founding by Englewood Hospital nurses in 1974, HPAE has expanded across the state and into Southeastern Pennsylvania representing 13,000 nurses, social workers, therapists, technicians, medical researchers, and other health care professionals in hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, blood banks, and university research facilities. HPAE is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.*