



For immediate release

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ACCESS calls on Department of Environmental Quality to deny Severstal request to increase fuel emissions from Dearborn plant

DEARBORN, Mich. – In a letter to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) this week, ACCESS (the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services) expressed its strong opposition to Severstal Dearborn's Permit to Install (PTI) 182-05C, which would essentially result in increased emissions of harmful pollutants into our environment.

As the largest Arab American human services non-profit in the United States, ACCESS vehemently opposes allowing the emission of this level of pollutants into an area that is already immersed in the pollutants of the industrial plants within the surrounding neighborhoods. In its letter to MDEQ, and in a separate letter to Severstal, ACCESS expressed its concern for surrounding communities and how their health will be negatively impacted as a result of these levels of emissions. The organization contested any permit that would approve an increase in emissions that would clearly pose an additional health risk to these families.

In 2002, ACCESS conducted a study with local universities that used a geographic information system (GIS) to evaluate the relationships between rates of emergency department admissions for asthma at the neighborhood block group level and found that the largest asthma clusters were within 2 km downwind of the industrial areas and the largest polluters in our region.

ACCESS is very disappointed in the level of communication by Severstal on this matter. As a large community organization, and as residents of the 48120 zip code, which includes our Youth and Family Services Center and our Administration Office, located at 2651 Saulino Ct., we would expect a greater effort to communicate with us.

Last week, during a public hearing on the matter at Henry Ford Community College, it was suggested that ACCESS was informed by Severstal of the proposed emissions increase. Contrary to this assumption, that is not the case. While Severstal claims to have informed our organization of this proposed increase, ACCESS has challenged the receipt of any communication from Severstal, which was allegedly addressed to a staff member who left our organization approximately two years ago. This letter was clearly not sent to the organization's executive office, nor was it addressed to the executive director. In fact, to date, ACCESS still has not seen a copy of this document.

ACCESS is very troubled that MDEQ is considering Severstal's request to raise the emissions standards for this facility. We join the community in opposition of this new permit. We will continue to consult and stand with leaders of the community who call on MDEQ to consider the serious health risks involved, among other factors, in rendering its decision and deny the application in its current form.

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Grounded in the Arab-American tradition of hospitality, ACCESS has a 43-year history of providing social, health, education and legal services in greater Detroit to empower people to lead healthy, informed and productive lives. Today, ACCESS extends that mission to a national platform through advocacy, arts, culture and philanthropy. Visit us online at www.accesscommunity.org.