



20 February 2023

Dear Member of Parliament,

**Re: Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill**

We write to you as senior health leaders to call on you to support the Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill. The Bill passed through the House of Lords with cross-party support, and we ask that you demonstrate leadership through the Commons by supporting the Bill.

The Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill would help to fulfil the UK's commitment to the landmark UN resolution passed in June 2022, which recognises the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including clean air. It would also put in place the legislation for this and future governments to deliver the actions needed to ensure every person in the UK has clean air to breathe. This would mark significant progress from the current status in which thousands of lives, including many children and vulnerable people, are impacted every year by breathing heavily polluted air.

As health professionals, we see first hand the impacts of air pollution on health. Nitrogen dioxide and PM2.5 have serious effects on the body causing respiratory infections, asthma, cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, neurological disorders, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Research published last year found evidence of air pollution particles in the lungs, liver and brain of first and second trimester fetuses in Scotland. If air quality is not urgently addressed, we face decades more of health conditions linked to air pollution, with poor outcomes for people and increasing strain on our stretched health service.

In 2016, the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health published 'Every breath we take'. This report examined the impact of exposure to air pollution across the life course. The report found that:

- Around 40,000 premature deaths every year in the UK are attributable to exposure to outdoor air pollution.
- The health problems resulting from exposure to air pollution have a high cost to our health services and to business. In the UK these costs add up to more than £20bn every year.
- People in lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to live in environments where they are more exposed to air pollution and therefore suffer more from the effects of exposure to high levels of air pollution.
- The public health response to air pollution should always be about protecting humans and the environment in ways that are socially inclusive and equitable, globally and across multiple generations.



## UK Health Alliance on Climate Change

The policies within the Clean Air Bill address the actions needed to tackle air pollution and set the framework for achieving cleaner air. As we reflect on the tenth anniversary of Ella Roberta Adoo Kissi Debrah's death, which was caused by breathing polluted air, as health leaders we would welcome your leadership in supporting the Bill.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the points raised.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Richard Smith CBE FMedSci, Chair UK Health Alliance on Climate Change  
Professor Andrew Elder, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh  
Professor Claire Anderson, President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society  
Dr Latifa Patel, Chair of representative body, BMA  
Dr Adrian James, President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists  
Kamran Abbasi, Editor in Chief of the BMJ  
Professor Kevin Fenton, President of the Faculty of Public Health  
Professor Neil Mortensen, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England  
Dr Richard Horton OBE, Editor-in-Chief & Publisher, The Lancet  
Dr Camilla Kingdon, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health  
Dr Hannah Chair, Partnerships Chair Planetary Health Report Card  
Mr Gordon Miles, CEO of The Royal College of Emergency Medicine  
Dr Raneer Thakar, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
Dr Matthew Davies, President, Association of Anaesthetists  
Dr Fiona Donald, President of the Royal College of Anaesthetists  
Professor Kamila Hawthorne, Chair of Council RCGP  
Professor Mike Wang, Chair of the Association of Clinical Psychologists UK