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Press statement of David R. Celebrezze OEC Director of Air & Water Special Projects

Every day, each of us breathes in 2,000 gallons of air. If that was water, and that water was contaminated with known carcinogens and other harmful pollutants, we would not touch it. Yet when it comes to dirty air, we do not have much of a choice. We have all been around that dirty diesel engine or that car idling needlessly and smelling that pollution. But what is in that pollution?

Diesel pollution is a toxic stew of known and probable carcinogens. These dangerous compounds include benzene, formaldehyde, volatile organic compounds, and particulate matter. Particulate matter can be as small as 1/30th the width of a human hair—small enough to get by the protective filters in our airway. According to government and medical researchers, this particle pollution:

- Triggers asthma attacks and causes lung damage, heart disease, cancer, and early death.
- Causes acid rain, ozone smog, haze, and global climate change.
- Drives up costs for business from lost work days caused by air pollution-related illness and by forcing counties in non-attainment areas to offset increases in emissions by restricting new economic growth.

According to the Clean Air Task Force, the diesel soot cancer risk in Franklin County is 400 times greater than the U.S. EPA's acceptable level. Medical research at The Ohio State University revealed that exposure to diesel pollution increases the mechanism for solid tumor growth.

Gasoline pollution has its own mixture of pollutants including carbon monoxide, particulates, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and benzene.

When nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds mix with the extended sunlight hours of summer, they create a Frankenstein monster known as ozone pollution.

According to the U.S. EPA, numerous scientific studies have linked ground-level ozone exposure to a variety of health problems, including:

- airway irritation, coughing, and pain when taking a deep breath;
- wheezing and breathing difficulties during exercise or outdoor activities;
- inflammation of the lung, which is much like a sunburn on the skin;
- aggravation of asthma and increased susceptibility to respiratory illnesses like pneumonia and bronchitis; and,
- permanent lung damage with repeated exposures.

This summer has hit Columbus especially hard. Already, eight air quality alert days have been issued—warning vulnerable groups including children, the elderly, people with asthma and respiratory illness, and even physically fit people who work or exercise outdoors to limit their

activities outdoors because the air is too polluted to breathe. When ozone goes up, everyone is at risk.

The good news is that affordable, common-sense solutions exist to solve this problem—including emission control equipment for diesel-powered vehicles and equipment, clean construction requirements at the state and federal levels, cleaner fuels, and more energy-efficient vehicles.

Today, we are focusing on a simple, efficient, and effective solution that everyone can practice: no-idling.

Did you know that idling a vehicle more than ten seconds uses more fuel than stopping and restarting your engine? Did you know that idling your engine can actually damage the cylinder walls and spark plugs because the fuel does not completely combust? It is true.

Today, we are calling on Columbus City Council President Michael Mentel and the City Council to step up and protect our health by adopting a fuel conservation ordinance to limit the idling of buses, trucks, and cars to no more than 5 minutes in a 60 minute timeframe. Similar ordinances have been adopted in cities around the country and several towns and cities right here in Ohio, including in Cleveland, Ohio.

There are common sense exemptions from this ordinance, such as:

- a vehicle crawling through a traffic jam
- a vehicle experiencing mechanical difficulty
- emergency vehicles
- semi-trucks using a clean auxiliary power unit to idle.

The benefits of reduced idling are amazing.

If all the registered passenger cars in Franklin County reduced their idling by 5 minutes each day for a year we could conserve 21 gallons of fuel and save \$48 million in fuel costs.

Conserving fuel also will improve our air quality and help us meet federal and state air quality standards for ozone pollution. If we fail these standards, Central Ohio could see the onset of vehicle emissions testing, emission off-sets, and/or the withholding of highway construction funds.

Columbus City Council can do the right thing and help us protect public health, clear the air, save energy, and save money. All they have to do is get on board and pass a fuel conservation ordinance. Thank you.

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio's leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio's families and communities. For more information, visit www.theOEC.org.