

Hello! My name is Lily and I am a 10 year old from Pittsburgh. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I REALLY like to be outdoors. I enjoy taking my dogs for walks, riding my scooter, going to the park, rock and crystal hunting, playing soccer with my friends and just being outdoors in general. Currently, I would like to be a veterinarian when I grow up and help animals, especially axolotls, cats, dogs, and snakes. I also really like to be in school so I can see my friends and teachers in person.

However, with how the environment is, it's hard for me to do any of my favorite things. Polluters, like the fossil fuel & petrochemical industries, have been hurting the environment to the point where I can't always be outside when I want to, go to school, and I'm very worried about the animals I care about and their health.

In Pittsburgh and the surrounding areas, we have a lot of air quality alert days. I have asthma, so my mom tells me that I need to stay indoors on those days. That means, no walks, no going to the park, no crystal and rock hunting, no playing with my friends, no outside fun at all. I can't even sit outside and just listen to music or enjoy a book. It sucks. It really sucks. I might be safe indoors, but the wild animals aren't. It sucks even more now.

At my school, we don't have air conditioning. So, when it's hot, we have to open our windows. The downside is that on air quality alert days, we have to choose between being too hot and being able to breathe. When it's REALLY hot, we can't even go to school and we have to have online school from home. We also can't play sports or go to our after school activities. I know not everyone has air conditioning at home, not everyone can learn well online, not everyone has internet, and not everyone has someone at home to help them. These polluters know that they are making the Earth hotter. They've known for, at least, decades. But, they keep doing it anyways. They keep making money and I can't even go to school OR go outside.

This is just a little about how this impacts me. But, it doesn't really talk about all they do to the Earth or the animals that live in ecosystems they destroy. Every year, I hear about some sort of accident that has happened, like an oil spill or other similar tragedies. These tragedies can take decades to bounce back from or an ecosystem can be permanently destroyed. It can ruin people's lives too.

After looking at all the damage these polluters do, it just doesn't seem worth it. Why risk it? Why should we keep suffering so they can make more money? It's not fair and it makes me mad that we have to live through a nightmare just so a few can make more money. It's time to stop. Time has shown us that they aren't going to change just randomly overnight. They know and they've seen the damage that they do, and yet they still haven't changed. So, how do we stop them? I can't just knock on their door and ask them to stop. They don't listen. So, what's the next step? Change the laws. Lawmakers already make laws to protect people like speed limit laws, seatbelts, child abuse, and more. Why haven't they passed laws to stop this? It's time to protect me and all the other kids like me. It's time to make them listen. It seems that you can tell what people care about by how they spend their money. Pennsylvania needs to invest better. Invest in us. Invest in our future and stop investing in or supporting industries that hurt us. Thank you.