



For Immediate Release

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Community Residents, Environmental Justice Advocates Call on the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to Address Discrimination in Location of Hazardous Waste Facilities

Detroit, MI –

The Great Lakes Environmental Law Center, on behalf of organizations and community members impacted by the discriminatory siting of hazardous waste treatment facilities in Michigan, filed a civil rights complaint with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), asking EGLE to address Michigan’s long history of discriminatory siting of commercial hazardous waste facilities.

The complaint comes on the tail end of U.S. Ecology North receiving approval for a 9-fold expansion of its hazardous waste storage capacity despite the neighborhood being 70% low-income and 80% people of color and being less than 2 miles from another major hazardous waste facility, U.S. Ecology South. **“For decades, companies such as U.S. Ecology have sought out communities of color for their hazardous waste facilities because they were seen as the path of least resistance for places to store, treat, and dispose of our society’s poisons,”** said **Michelle Martinez, Director of the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition.** **“We need EGLE to step up and protect us from environmental racism, or this legacy will continue for another several decades.”**

The complaint details that Michigan is one of the worst states regarding the discriminatory siting of commercial hazardous waste facilities in communities of color. A 2007 report found that the percentage of people of color living in a commercial hazardous waste host community was 66% compared to 19% for non-host communities, which was the largest difference in the country. This issue has continued unabated. Today, 65% of people living within 3 miles of a commercial hazardous waste facility in Michigan are people of color, despite being only 25% of the state’s population. To make matters worse, most of the wastes received by commercial hazardous waste facilities come from out of state. In total, Michigan commercial hazardous

waste facilities received 316,548 tons of hazardous waste in 2017 per biennial reports filed by each facility. 70% of this waste was received from out-of-state, 25% was received from sources within the state, but outside of the county where the commercial hazardous waste facility is located, and only 5% was received from a source within the same county where the commercial hazardous waste facility is located. **“This is a classic environmental justice issue,” said Justin Onwenu of the Sierra Club. “Communities of color in Michigan are serving as the dumping grounds for hazardous waste from all over the state and country. EGLE has made addressing environmental injustice a priority, and now is the time for action.”**

At a time when nationwide protests have rightfully brought the disparate treatment of communities of color to the forefront of the nation’s consciousness, it is here in Michigan that some of the most insidious forms of environmental racism are the worst in the nation. **“We know that companies such as U.S. Ecology will continue to locate and expand hazardous waste facilities in communities of color if they are left unchecked,” said Nick Leonard of the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center. “We want to work with EGLE to craft a solution to this long-standing problem.”**

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