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Thank you for the opportunity to share my story today. I am a wife, mother and person of faith and work for the Evangelical Environmental Network.

In Mark Chapter 10, when children were brought to Jesus, he said ““Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”

I have recently learned of two ways that my children and others have been exposed to methane and other toxics. Residents of a subsidized retirement home in Cleveland, Ohio had been complaining of a smell for decades but, even with outside help, the source was not found. In Spring of 2022, the facility was undergoing a construction project and fortunately discovered the well head. The well had first been dug over a century ago and had been plugged in 1950. Unfortunately the clay used to plug the well had leaked and the well has probably been leaking for decades. This well was in a relatively populated area with several schools, playgrounds, a metropark with hiking trails and a hospital.

But it was also within 1 mile of the home where my family lived from 2005-2012. My youngest daughter went to preschool a couple of blocks away from the time she was an infant until she was 3 years old. During the years my children were learning to walk, talk, read and write, they were living and/or going to daycare near this leaking well.

I now live in Cambria County, Pennsylvania which recently made national news for a massive leak at a storage well¹. After detection, the leak was not properly plugged for almost two weeks. In that time, it is estimated that the well emitted the near-term warming equivalent generated by 360,000 cars in one year². In just TWO WEEKS! This storage well is in my children's school district where their schoolmates and teammates live and play and is just a few miles from my home. Local residents reported being able to hear and smell the gas leak as far as 2 miles away. Some reported headaches and difficulty breathing when they were outside.

Last year, I had the opportunity to attend the 100th well plugging in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania under Governor Shapiro. As I listened to the governor share about the health impacts of methane, I stood in a remote state park that was beautifully picturesque on a colorful, brisk fall day. I listened as birds chirped and watched as leaves fell from trees behind the governor. I talked to others at the celebration that talked about how they enjoyed hiking there during the mentally draining quarantine days of the pandemic. And right there in the middle of this park, was a well that they believed to have been leaking for 3 decades, contaminating the air and water in the very place people came to seek solace and peace.

¹ <https://www.cleveland.com/news/2022/04/plugging-an-orphan-gas-well-in-cleveland-using-market-based-approach-not-taxpayer-dollars.html>

² <https://blogs.edf.org/energyexchange/2022/11/21/what-a-catastrophic-gas-leak-in-pennsylvania-means-for-our-climate-and-health/>

Living and going to school within a half mile threat radius is associated with negative health outcomes like respiratory and heart diseases and increased exposure to known cancer causing³ chemicals. Methane is also responsible for 25% of the human-produced warming we experience today. With rising temperatures come increased smog and associated asthma attacks and increased cases of vector-borne diseases like Lyme Disease.⁴

Was the health of my children impacted because of exposure during their formative years? Are we hindering children from coming to the kingdom of God by exposing them to these toxics which impact their health?

Any attempt by Administrator Zeldin to delay the dates by which polluters must comply with commonsense protections means people living on the frontline of oil and gas development will continue to be unnecessarily exposed to dangerous air pollution. This includes nearly 1.5 million people in Pennsylvania and over 3.3 million people in Ohio, including me and my children. This exposure is especially harmful to children and babies, both born and unborn, whose hearts, minds and lungs are developing.

Implementing this rule in a timely manner is essential to defending American children and families from health-harming pollution. These emissions from the oil and gas industry are known to be dangerous, including volatile organic compounds and pollutants such as benzene, which is known to cause cancer. Delaying these standards by just 12 months would result in 970,000 tons of volatile organic compound emissions and 36,000 tons of hazardous air pollutants that could otherwise be prevented. The health impacts of this would be devastating for families across the country.

These leaks have hit way too close to home for me and my family in the last few years. Please do what you can now to avoid more like them in the future. Do not delay implementation of these standards or extend the deadlines of the rule. Please do this so more parents like me don't ever wonder whether where their children live, learn and play is safe for them.



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³ <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.7b05983>

⁴ https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/21/8/14-1878_article