

Press Release

Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization

For Immediate Release

Attention: News Assignment

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Local Residents on Solis Lead Ordinance: Good, But Much More Needs to be Done

Chicago, IL -- On Monday, July 26 Jerry Mead-Lucero testified on behalf of PERRO (*the Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization*) in support of the new Lead Ordinance proposed by Alderman Daniel Solis (25th Ward) targeting the city's lead polluters. "We were not happy with the lack of community process in drafting this ordinance and think it could have been stronger, but we recognize it is a step in the right direction." PERRO and other Pilsen community groups such as the Pilsen Alliance opposed the original version of the proposed ordinance put forward last April by Solis.

However last minute changes to Monday's ordinance by the alderman enabled PERRO to support it. The new Ordinance was significantly altered from the original after PERRO voiced criticisms, but still lacked sufficient measures to clean up most lead polluters in Chicago. In addition, Alderman Solis refused to meet with PERRO and community members on the ordinance, so PERRO planned to oppose the new ordinance. However, at the last minute Solis did respond to PERRO's request to reduce the threshold companies would be allowed to emit the deadly toxin from 200 pounds per year to 100 pounds, so PERRO opted to support the ordinance. "We are glad that Solis responded to our criticisms and altered his proposal accordingly, but this still could be a much better ordinance if the Alderman will agree to meet with us and work on this together," said PERRO Member Dorian Breuer.

Earlier this year the Illinois and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that the Pilsen community has high levels of lead pollution in its air. The EPA determined this after being pushed by PERRO to install an air monitor in the community in 2009. The air monitor located at the Perez Elementary School has consistently found lead levels that exceed the government's legal standards. The City of Chicago lead ordinance could provide yet another tool to help crack down on lead polluters, including the Fisk and Crawford coal fired power plants which are also significant sources of air born lead contamination in the Pilsen neighborhood and is expected to face the full City Council on Thursday.

"This is a good first step, but we hope that alderman Solis will agree to work more closely with residents and organizations like PERRO and others in the future to ensure we are really doing everything we can to reduce the pollution in our community" explains Mead-Lucero. PERRO is an environmental justice organization based in the Pilsen neighborhood. For more info: pilsenperro.org

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