

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 15, 2025

Richard Woychik, Ph.D.
Director, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
P.O. Box 12233
Mail Drop B2-06
Durham, NC 27709

Dear Director Woychik:

I write in support of the University of Pittsburgh's application for the East Palestine (Ohio) Train Derailment Research Opportunity, administered through the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). The University's application seeks funding to implement a community environmental health initiative to help monitor and address the health impacts of the East Palestine, OH, train derailment on surrounding communities in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

On February 3, 2023, a freight train carrying vinyl chloride (VC) and other chemicals derailed in East Palestine, in Columbiana County, OH. VC leaked into the air, soil, surface water, and groundwater. Approximately 40% of the 10-mile area most impacted by the derailment is in Beaver County, PA, just a few miles from East Palestine. To assess the immediate impact of the derailment on human health and the environment, NIEHS supported six time-sensitive research projects in 2023, two of which were awarded to University of Pittsburgh researchers.

I appreciate the concern that NIEHS and the National Institutes of Health have shown for these communities by establishing a \$10 million program to more comprehensively assess the impact of this derailment. This application submitted by the University of Pittsburgh's Schools of Public Health, Medicine, and Engineering, in collaboration with the Ohio State University and the Columbiana County Health Department, builds on the success of previously awarded research grants. This collaborative effort also takes advantage of longstanding community partnerships and on-the-ground knowledge of community leaders in all aspects of research.

As the potential for future incidents remains ever present, the relevance and benefits of this research program go far beyond the communities impacted by this derailment in 2023. Understanding the health effects of such incidents and, more importantly, being prepared for the next one is a key goal of the work proposed by the University of Pittsburgh and its partners.

I urge you to give this application full and fair consideration. Feel free to contact my office at (202) 224-4254 if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John Fetterman
United States Senator