October 4, 2017

Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Rob Portman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown and Senator Portman:

Faith communities have a profound call to be guardians of God’s creation and our communities’ health. In particular, we are called to voice our concern about toxic pollution. As leaders in the religious community—across a broad spectrum of denominations and organizations—we are writing to convey our common conviction that protecting vulnerable people from toxic pollution sites is a priority. Superfund sites are of particular concern.

The Judeo-Christian traditions teach us that we are judged by how we care for those who are most vulnerable. This includes children, older adults, people with low-incomes, and communities of color. It also includes threatened and endangered species. Toxic pollution sites pose a particular risk to the air, soil and water of fenceline and neighboring communities. According to the Toxic Waste and Race study by the United Church of Christ\(^1\), people of color are more likely than any other demographic to bear disproportionate and unjust health burdens of toxic pollution.

Across Ohio there are 35 Superfund sites and located in both rural and urban areas. These sites, managed by the Environmental Protection Agency, require long-term response to clean up hazardous material contaminations.

To administer the Superfund Clean Up Program, the Environmental Protection Agency needs the necessary staff and funding resources to implement. The EPA’s Superfund program is responsible for cleaning up some of the nation’s most contaminated land and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills and disasters. To protect God’s creation and human health, it is vital that this important program be provided robust funding.

Across our community and across the country, religious leaders and people of faith have embraced the work of safeguarding ecological systems, so that the diversity of life can thrive—both human, and nonhuman.

In the coming days and months, as you help to shape key budget decisions regarding environmental issues – particularly clean air and water, as well as land protections – we urge you

to be guided by a moral framework that includes responsible stewardship of God’s creation, and meeting our moral obligations to protect vulnerable communities today, and future generations.

Sincerely,

Greg Hitzhusen  
Assistant Professor Religion, Ecology and Sustainability  
Ohio State University

Rev. Rebecca Tollefson  
Executive Director, Ohio Council of Churches  
Columbus, OH

Mr. Robert Downs  
Chair, Creation Task Force, West Ohio United Methodist Conference  
Member, Dayton Christian Connection  
Dayton, OH

Rev. Mila Cooper  
Co-Pastor, Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Dayton, OH

Rev. Xavier Johnson  
Pastor, Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Dayton  
Dayton, OH

Rev. John M. Richardson  
Interim Regional Minister, Christian Church in Ohio  
Columbus, OH

Sister Carren Herring  
Sisters of Mercy  
Cincinnati, OH

Sister Sarah Sherman  
Sisters of Mercy  
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Matthew Groenke  
Pastor, Christ the King Lutheran Church  
Twinsburg, OH

Alycia Ashburn  
Cleveland, OH
Rev Dr J. Roger Skelley-Watts
Huron United Methodist Church
Vermilion, OH

Rev. Michael Castle
Harmony Creek Church
Kettering, OH

Sister Loretto Gettemeier
Daughters of Charity
Maryland Heights, MO

Sister Karen Hartman
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Lynn Bozich Shetzer
Pastor, Reedurban Presbyterian Church
North Canton, OH

Rev. David Sickles
Wayside Presbyterian Church
Willoughby, OH

The Rev. Thomas Fehr
Community of the Transfiguration
Cincinnati, OH

Pastor Barbara Sayler
Beavercreek Church of the Brethren
Englewood, OH

Elder Carl Whitaker
Bibleway C.O.G.I.C
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. James Harris
Brown Chapel AME
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Wesley Reid
Lee Memorial AME Zion
Cleveland, OH

Rev. Paul Bowers
Greater Emmanuel Apostolic Temple
Cincinnati, OH
Rev. Sherrill Smith
St Luke Baptist
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Claude V. Berry
Tabernacle Baptist
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. George Parks
Sacrificial Baptist Church
Cleveland, OH

Rev. Walter R. Huston
Temple of Praise Baptist Church
Cleveland, OH

Rev. Gerald Cooper
Wayman AME Church
Dayton, OH

Rev. Xavier L. Johnson
Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
Dayton, OH

Rev. Floyd Brown
St Stephens Community Church
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Donald Newberry
Lee Chapel AME
Cincinnati, OH

Bishop Bobby Hilton
Word of Deliverance Ministries
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Taylor Thompson
Quinn Chapel AME
Cincinnati, OH

Sister Geraldine Nowak, OSF
Ohio