

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Shimkus
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce,
Subcommittee on the Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
2217 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on the Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
2463 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Pallone, Subcommittee Chairman Shimkus, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Tonko:

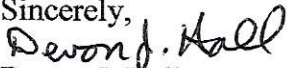
I am the co-founder/Program Manager of the Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help (REACH) of Duplin County, North Carolina. REACH has been empowering the citizens of Duplin County since 2002.

Ranking second nationally in hog production, North Carolina faces unprecedented environmental devastation and health risks from factory farm waste. Over the decades, hog farms have become most concentrated in Eastern North Carolina, which is home to the ten counties with the highest density of swine in the country. A majority of rural African-Americans also reside in this part of the state. There is a documented, disproportionate impact on people of color from these factory farms. Earlier this year, the U.S. EPA Office of Environmental Justice raised concerns about the problems caused by these hog operations and expressed “grave concerns” about threats and intimidation against the minority residents who complained about these problems.

Many residents of Duplin County have relied on well water for their sole sources of drinking water. Water is essential to life, and we should all have access to clean drinking water. Communities living around these industrial farming operations must deal with a lot of problems – from asthma to the stench to contaminated water.

Access to clean drinking water for our families should not be at the whim of these operators. It is a basic human right. As a community who deals every day with the health and quality of life impacts of industrial animal agriculture, we stand in solidarity with other communities facing similar threats.

Any community should be allowed to demand that factory farms stop contaminating their drinking water. We are deeply troubled that the Discussion Draft seeks to eliminate the ability for communities to fight on their own behalf. Residents who rely on well water have no other place to turn for help.

Sincerely,

Devon J. Hall, Sr.