

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**REGIONAL NETWORK CALLS ON NIH AND CDC TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE
IN THE WAKE OF TOXIC DISASTER**

Network says those impacted by the East Palestine train derailment should have the same access to medical monitoring and health studies put in place after 9/11 and other toxic disasters

PITTSBURGH, PA (March 27, 2023) – In the aftermath of the toxic tragedy of the train derailment in East Palestine, the Cancer and Environment Network of Southwestern Pennsylvania (CENSWPA) is troubled by the lack of a coordinated public health response necessary to research and respond to health concerns now and into the future.

Given the scale of the disaster, residents and workers (including Norfolk Southern employees responding to the incident, journalists, first responders, and HAZMAT clean-up workers, among others) all deserve to know that a research and response infrastructure is in place to answer questions about their ongoing health. We honor the tremendous effort by researchers from federal and state agencies as well as academic and non-profit research organizations working to characterize the contamination and exposure levels in air, water, and soil. However, as a Network focused on preventing environmental causes of cancer, we are deeply concerned that despite numerous carcinogens released or formed during the incident, there will be no ability to answer questions about cancer and other chronic diseases in the years ahead. Although agencies such as the CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are working to assess acute health outcomes in relation to the incident, we need to commit to the establishment of a research infrastructure that can monitor and respond to *chronic* health conditions in association with the train derailment.

The ATSDR and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) should allocate the necessary funding to public health research institutions to implement an appropriate research response in the wake of this tragedy, akin to systems and research programs put in place for other toxic disasters, such as the World Trade Center Health Registry created after 9/11.

“Although Norfolk Southern should be required to pay for the necessary medical monitoring and related health studies, we cannot wait for the results of litigation before time-sensitive formative data are collected. We are already losing time to establish the necessary research infrastructure to support the conduct of medical monitoring and health studies in the years ahead,” said Dani Wilson, executive director of CENSWPA. “There are established research institutions and non-governmental organizations across Ohio, Southwest Pennsylvania and beyond doing all that they can to assist. Their work must be expanded and funded by the federal government to assist the people who were in the vicinity at the time of and shortly after the disaster.”

ABOUT CANCER & ENVIRONMENT NETWORK OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Cancer & Environment Network of Southwestern Pennsylvania is a network of 50+ organizations and includes scientists, survivors, changemakers, caretakers, and leaders in healthcare, business, philanthropy, and community. We are grounded in science, committed to prevention, and focused on the reduction of hazardous chemicals in our air, water, food, homes, workplaces, and products. We are diverse in our perspectives, yet united in our vision for a cancer-free region.