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Good evening and thank you for your time today and for listening to my testimony. My name is Rachel Frankford. I live at 2125 St. Albans St in Philadelphia. I am here tonight as a lifelong Pennsylvanian, a teacher, and a mother. It is vital and urgent that the PA Department of Environmental Protection take the strongest action possible to limit methane pollution from the oil and gas industry.

I am currently pregnant with my second child. Just last week, major news outlets, including the New York Times, reported on research showing that pregnant women and their babies are at risk from complications, including stillbirth, due to air pollution and heat waves, both of which are worsened by climate change. The report also found that women of color face the greatest risk.

In addition, we have seen in the past few months that people exposed to worse air quality are at greater risk of dying of COVID-19. Methane pollution and the global warming it fuels are also worsening public health crises that also disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. Pennsylvania, unfortunately, has the distinction of being the third largest greenhouse gas producing state in the nation, and the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metro areas have both received failing air quality grades from the American Lung Association. Again, communities of color bear the brunt of dangerously polluted air.

Here are some specific actions the Department of Environmental Protection can take. Right now there is a loophole in the draft rule for low producing wells. This may not sound like a problem, but these wells are responsible for more than half the methane pollution in the state. This loophole must be closed. Second, current provisions allow inspectors to reduce the frequency of inspections when previous leaks have not been detected. This is unsafe. Leaks can develop at any time. Frequent, regular inspections are necessary to ensure our safety.

A majority of Pennsylvanians support strong climate action such as more aggressive methane mitigation. We are already seeing the pernicious effects of climate change, including hotter summers, the spread of Lyme disease, and more frequent, severe storms. Stopping climate change is not like pulling the emergency brake on a train. Once gases like methane are released into the atmosphere, they are here to stay. We are running out of time. I worry constantly about my students and my son. What will their future look like on a rapidly warming planet, when there seems to be so little political will to do anything about it and put people before polluters? Please do right by Pennsylvanians—those who are here now and those who will have no choice but to live in the future we are creating by our actions today. Thank you for your time.

