Hello, my name is Gloria Lehmer. I live in Farmington, NM, and have been a lifelong resident of that area in San Juan County. I am member of Mom’s Clean Air Force.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I was a medical speech-language pathologist in our Regional Medical Center for 24 years. I am a board member of our River Reach Foundation, which is dedicated to protection, promotion, and enhancement of the three rivers and riverine corridor that run through our city. I also volunteer for a myriad of groups who help children, and for those who care about human and environmental justice.

I am here today to state that I am against our Administration’s proposed rollback of the EPA’S New Source Performance Standards—pollution limits that protect us from harmful methane pollution. I am concerned for the health and safety of the families who are impacted by emissions and other consequences of extraction industries.

My Community and the Four Corners area of NM, CO, UT, & AZ have the unfortunate distinction of having a huge methane cloud above us. I was present when scientists from NASA & NOAA came to our local college to report on their findings and to travel around our County by van and by plane to study the source of the problem. I followed up again after study results were given, reporting that the majority of the methane was found concentrated near oil & gas facilities. I have been with those who utilize a FLIR camera to detect leaks and venting. I have seen the fumes with the naked eye, and have smelled the hazardous fumes at well sites in our area.

You see, the towns and cultural sites in our beautiful high desert area have these oil & gas developments riddled throughout them (yes, even within city limits and near Chaco Canyon and other ancient national monuments, and next to rivers, schools, and homes—my home.

I live near and, on a daily basis, drive past well sites near my home. When I look out and go outside, I see a drilling rig and several well pads. Where we walk our dogs, we see an unreclaimed abandoned well pad full of invasive weeds and void of the beautiful pinon trees, junipers and other native plants that used to be there. I hear the noise of nearby compressors. When I drive on U.S. Hwy 550 to Albuquerque, I see the destruction and the eyesore of swaths of land cleared for roads & pipelines, and well pads. I see well pads, pump jacks, drilling rigs, compressor stations, processing plants, and huge storage tanks, open pits, and dangerous, noisy truck traffic. At night you can see large flares. You drive past the large area designated a “Land Farm” where contaminated earth is brought from areas near and far, reportedly sometimes treated with chemicals, sometimes not, but often containing unknown chemicals from well sites.

If this proposal to weaken these commonsense, cost-effective oil & gas pollution standards is put into effect, the EPA will be ignoring its responsibility to protect the health and safety of my Community and others.

Since the 1920’s, the San Juan Basin of my area, & the Permian Basin in southeastern counties of NM (as well as Texas) have been dependent on the booms of the oil & gas industry. Economies, businesses, & education have lived with the ups and downs of the boom & bust cycles. Recently, some in the industry say they can live with the EPA Methane Rule, which has been in effect for almost a year without adverse economic impacts. In states such as Colorado, quite the opposite has occurred! But Donald Trump and Andrew Wheeler are proposing this dangerous rollback, which is likely a precursor toward steps to eliminate the Rule! Sadly, this fits an agenda of creating loopholes for corporate polluters.

I’ll tell you why I am against this rollback and why it is dangerous to Communities like the one I live in. Rolling back EPA’s methane standards means more pollution in our air and have a negative impact on our health—especially for those of us who live near these facilities and depend on these protections to keep the air that we breathe clean, and the land and water free from contamination.

Our Planet is suffering as well. Extreme weather we are witnessing extreme weather, from wildfires (the most recent, the deadliest in CA history) to hurricanes, tornadoes, and flooding. With over 80 times the warming power of carbon pollution, methane is a dangerous contributor to climate change.

We should not move backward. The reality is that these standards are cost-effective pollution controls that do not harm industry. This proposal is a step backward, and we deserve to move forward to a cleaner energy economy. Our citizens deserve clean air to breathe and good health. The EPA should keep its methane rules strong and intact.