CHRISTIAN D. MENEFEE
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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The Honorable Administrator Lee Zeldin
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Regional Administrator Scott Mason IV
Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
1201 Elm Street
Dallas, TX 75270

November 9, 2026

Dear Administrator Zeldin and Regional Administrator Mason:

I write to demand that the Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") immediately release the draft health risk evaluation (the "Draft Report") for the Union Pacific Railroad ("UPRR") Houston Wood Preserving Works site within the Greater Fifth Ward and adjacent to Kashmere Gardens in Houston, Texas.

The Draft Report tells families what the testing at the site found and what it means for their health. EPA received the Draft Report from UPRR on October 9, 2025. Yet 396 days later, EPA has inexplicably failed to make it public.

As the Member of Congress representing these communities, I wrote to you earlier this year on July 2 and asked for a briefing, the timeline for the final report, whether UPRR had requested extensions, and access to draft materials. Your September 23 reply pointed me to a website and gave no date.

The community is done waiting. As am I.

BACKGROUND

Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens are home to a rail yard and the adjacent UPRR Houston Wood Preserving Works site (the "Site"), a former wood treatment facility on Liberty Road, right next to numerous residential neighborhoods.

For years, numerous community members who live near the Site have died from cancer. Residents started organizing and got public officials involved, and in 2019, the Texas Department of State Health Services found significantly higher than expected rates of certain cancers in the census tracts around the Site.

Every time a resident who lives near the Site dies from cancer, it deals a tragic blow to these communities. Barbara Beal lived a stone's throw from the railroad tracks and helped organize residents to demand answers about the Site. She died of cancer on August 8, 2023. Corinthian

Giles lived about two blocks from the rail yard in Kashmere Gardens. He died of leukemia in 2021, at 13 years old. His mother, LaTonya Payne, has survived breast cancer twice, and she has buried her son. There are many more stories like theirs.

There is no dispute that the Site has legacy contamination from the previous wood treatment operations. In 2023, EPA took charge of the investigation under an agreement with UPRR that requires a report determining how contaminated the area is and what it means for the health of community members who live there. EPA told residents to expect the final report in late 2025 or early 2026. That window has closed.

Even worse, EPA still has not provided a path forward for the community to give feedback on the Draft Report once EPA makes it public. In a November 24, 2025 letter, EPA told the Community Advisory Group, the resident group that advises EPA on this Site, that it was "committed to a path forward that ensures community engagement" and would work out that process with the community "in the coming weeks and months." Members of the Community Advisory Group have repeatedly told my office that hasn't happened.

The families who are losing loved ones to cancer have come to the meetings EPA held about the Site. They have joined the Community Advisory Group. They have asked EPA in writing for a comment period on November 7, 2025, and for the Draft Report and a comment period again on October 16, 2026. They have made decisions about their homes and their children without information EPA already has. All while their neighbors are still dying of cancer.

DEMANDS

EPA must do three things, and I expect its written answer by December 1, 2026:

1. Release the Draft Report immediately, with its data, and tell the community about any other drafts EPA has received.

2. Adopt the public participation plan the Community Advisory Group proposed. The plan has five parts: a 60-day public comment period on the draft; a stakeholder meeting soon after the period opens; a formal hearing before it closes; written answers to the comments, with changes to the report as needed; and a final report that includes those answers. EPA must hold publication of the final report until that process ends.

3. Announce the date EPA will issue the final report once the comment period ends.

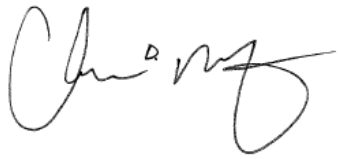
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Families in Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens have waited 396 days.

They deserve answers now.

If I don't have EPA's written answer by December 1, I will carry these questions into the next Congress and use every tool available to get answers for my constituents.

Sincerely,



Christian D. Menefee
Member of Congress
Texas's 18th Congressional District

cc: Casey Luckett Snyder, Project Manager, EPA Region 6
Joetta Stevenson, Chairwoman, EPA Fifth Ward/Kashmere Gardens/UPRR Site Community Advisory Group