Executive Order on Environmental Justice
Signed by Governor Deval Patrick on November 25, 2014

The Executive Order will direct all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety and environment of the most vulnerable residents of the Commonwealth and encourage public participation in governmental decisions.

State agencies will craft plans to address environmental justice. These strategies must protect EJ communities when agencies have authority over development projects, brownfield remediation, industrial operations and commercial facilities, and identify funding programs, environmental benefits and economic development opportunities.

Agencies will have public participation plans that use inclusive outreach activities like producing materials in multiple languages and scheduling public meetings at convenient times and places for neighborhood residents.

Additionally, each agency will have an EJ Coordinator responsible for carrying out these strategies, and the Commonwealth will also establish an Advisory Council with community stakeholders to oversee implementation of the Executive Order.

State agencies:
- Administration and Finance
- Education
- Energy and Environmental Affairs
- Health and Human Services
- Housing and Economic Development
- Labor and Workforce Development
- MassDOT
- Public Safety and Security

This law ensures that low-income communities, communities of color and communities with limited English-proficiency will have new tools and resources to remedy disproportionate environmental burdens, moving all of us in Massachusetts toward a greener, cleaner, more climate-stable future.

The Massachusetts EJ Alliance, convened by ACE, is a network of organizers, health professionals, academic researchers and other residents united in moving an environmental justice policy agenda. We have more than 20 grassroots member groups from across the state. We recognize the contributions by many researchers and environmental organizations who join us in the Alliance.

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For 20 years we’ve been working in Chelsea on some of the most egregious environmental justice issues in the state. We are thrilled that Governor Patrick is signing an Executive Order on Environmental Justice. The EO recognizes that communities like Chelsea, East Boston and Roxbury bear the brunt of impacts for regional benefits, and the order will require far more comprehensive planning and community involvement in affected communities.

—Roseann Bongiovanni, Chelsea Greenspace

The Executive Order provides us with the opportunity to inform, educate and empower residents who otherwise feel powerless against the actions of our local officials.

—Mary Ann Babinski, Westfield Concerned Citizens

This is a time of excitement to fairly address those who are unjustly burdened by environmental hazards. This will give people voices and opportunities.

—Reverend Curtis Dias, Concerned Citizens of Freetown

The Executive Order will give us a fighting chance to stop things from coming into our community that will hurt us—and even help us develop projects that will be good for the community.

—Michaelann Bewsee, Arise for Social Justice, Springfield

Suffolk County has

309x

the risk deemed acceptable by the EPA for average lifetime cancer risk from diesel soot—the highest in the state

People of color in MA are exposed to

5.7x

the amount of nitrogen dioxide air pollution than whites—Boston has the fourth worst disparity rate in the US

Communities of color are nearly

4x

more likely to house dirty power plants than white communities in MA

This will support the work of CLEAN and Hands Across the River Coalition in moving the EJ agenda forward in New Bedford.

—Eddie Johnson, Citizens Leading Environmental Action Network

Groundwork Lawrence

MA EJ Alliance delivering postcards urging Governor Patrick to sign the EJ EO. Photo by Marilyn Humphries