growth energy™
America's Ethanol Supporters

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February 9, 2021

Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager
795 Massachusetts Ave., 1st Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. DePasquale:

We write to share our concerns regarding the City of Cambridge's deployment of fuel pump labels that could mislead consumers regarding the proven environmental and health benefits of ethanol.

Growth Energy is the world's largest association of biofuel producers, representing 89 U.S. plants that each year produce more than 7.5 billion gallons of renewable fuel. Together, we are working to bring better and more affordable choices at the fuel pump to consumers, improve air quality, and protect the climate for future generations.

As part of that mission, we support strong public policies aimed at reducing America's dependence on fossil fuels and displacing a growing share of the gas tank with renewable options, like biofuels. We also support the city council's directive to "provide consumers with information about the impact of fossil fuel consumption directly at the point of purchase, which may encourage them to reduce their consumption and use alternative forms of transportation when appropriate."

Unfortunately, the newly released labels created by the City of Cambridge suggest that "Gasoline, Diesel, and Ethanol" fall into the same category, despite overwhelming evidence that higher ethanol blends – including E85 sold in Cambridge – represent the single most affordable and accessible option for most drivers seeking to protect our climate and human health.

In fact, as an octane booster, ethanol plays a major role in cleaning up our transportation sector and displacing harmful fuel additives, like benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene (BTEX) that can be found in petroleum-based fuels. Alongside other air quality benefits, these characteristics have taken on new importance as health experts – led by the team at Harvard – dig deeper into the human costs of air pollution, including heightened risk from COVID-19 in vulnerable communities.

Aromatic compounds – like BTEX – play a dominant role in the formation of toxic emissions linked to cancer, as well as neurological, cardiovascular, and reproductive damage. These compounds also drive significant increases in particulate emissions, which cause asthma and contribute to heart and lung disease. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 4.2 million premature deaths globally are linked to air pollution, making it one of the world's top killers.

Fortunately, we have a better option in higher ethanol blends, which can and should be encouraged. One study by the University of California Riverside found that ethanol blends reduce toxic emissions by up to 50 percent, including smog and ultra-fine particulates. Just last week, groundbreaking research led by

David MacIntosh, Chief Science Officer of Environmental Health & Engineering, Inc. (EH&E) and Adjunct Associate Professor of Environmental Health at Harvard, found that greenhouse gas emissions from corn ethanol are 46 percent lower than gasoline, and we also recently saw an analysis by the Rhodium Group which concluded that biofuels must be in the mix if we are to attain net-zero emissions by 2050.

Additional research conducted in five global cities by the University of Illinois at Chicago found that E10 ethanol blends could cut toxic emissions by 15.2 percent, while E20 blends could reduce toxins by 31.7 percent. In all cities, according to the study, "the transition to ethanol fuels is estimated to save thousands of years of potential life lost from exposure to these pollutants." Ethanol blends were also shown to decrease cancer rates, saving "several thousand years of potential life lost in each city and an additional tens of millions of dollars of direct healthcare costs for cancer treatment." Follow-up research from the same team, conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic, offers further evidence that biofuel blends can improve health outcomes and save lives.

These are just a few examples from the vast trove of public, private, and academic research illustrating ethanol's role as a vital element of America's clean fuel mix. That is why leaders at the American Lung Association and other public health champions have encouraged drivers to "consider choosing ethanol fuels at the pump to benefit air quality and improve lung health."

Given these facts, we urge the City of Cambridge to quickly amend its new fuel pump labels and remove ethanol from the label to ensure that motorists are not discouraged from making smarter, cleaner choices with higher ethanol blends. The data is clear. Without ethanol, we would be rolling back the clock, with higher emissions of particulate matter, carbon monoxide, greenhouse gasses, and smog-forming pollutants.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to advance Cambridge's climate leadership and help the city achieve its air quality goals through expanded use of low-carbon, renewable biofuels.

Sincerely,

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