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Joint statement on resignation of DEP Environmental Justice Advocate

The Center for Coalfield Justice and Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club released the following statement about DEP Office of Environmental Justice Director Carl Jones Resignations:

“The lack of notice to environmental justice communities regarding the resignation of Carl Jones demonstrates that this administration is not acting in good faith to address the needs of impacted communities,” said Veronica Coptis, Executive Director with the Center for Coalfield Justice. “The first step in any process should always be communication and the Department has failed us in that regard.”

“Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution states: the people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment,” said Tom Torres of the Sierra Club PA Chapter. “It should be the Office of Environmental Justice’s responsibility to ensure that the Department takes its mandate under the Pennsylvania constitution seriously rather than simply fulfilling its administrative duties.”

The Center for Coalfield Justice and the Sierra Club PA Chapter ask that the Department of Environmental Protection prioritize funding for the Office of Environmental Justice and not use the current budget issue as an excuse to leave the position vacant. They also encourage the Department to lean on the expertise of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board and enlist their help in identifying a new director.