

December 3rd, 2019

Governor Jared Polis
ATTN: Jeff Robbins
State Capitol Building
200 E. Colfax Ave., Rm. 136
Denver, CO 80203

Governor Jared Polis and Director Robbins,

My name is Patricia Nelson, I am a resident of Greeley, Colorado and a mother of a student at Bella Romero Academy. On Monday, November 25, 2019, around 12:00 pm, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment sent out a press release reporting that an elevated level of benzene had been measured by the CDPHE's mobile lab located at Bella Romero's 4-8 grade campus.

The spike in the levels of benzene was measured at 3:50 pm on Tuesday, November 5, a school day. Pick up time is 3:45 pm. Keep in mind that those 'safe' levels of exposure - 9ppb - are typically intended for adults, this means that a chemical exposure would be even more dangerous for these children running out of the building after the bell rang. The mobile lab also measures 12 ft. in the air. On such a cold November day, it is likely the benzene would have been more concentrated closer to the ground where the children actually are. I was made aware of this incident not by CDPHE, nor school officials, but by a reporter inquiring about the findings.

We have been told time and time again by your COGCC commissioners, your administration, and the operator that this kind of site is safe, that there is nothing to worry about. However, the Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization and dozens of peer-reviewed studies, have said otherwise. Just in case you need more clarity, there are NO safe levels of exposure to benzene, and now your own agency confirms that the children of Bella Romero have been exposed to this carcinogen. The school officials I met with were under the impression that there would be [no activity at the site while the children were in school](#). For the last two years that has been proven to be a lie.

I am writing to you today to ask that there is an immediate stop to Extraction Oil and Gas's operation that is located a mere 1,200 ft from the front door of my child's school.

Governor Polis, you appointed the commission and as the Director of the COGCC, Mr. Robbins, you are not only responsible for the approval of the permits but you are also responsible for the protection of public health and safety from oil and gas operations. A full 21 days passed before we were notified of the exposure. Meanwhile, the families of Bella Romero were dealing with children complaining of headaches and nausea. The same symptoms the recent CDPHE health study said would come from benzene exposure from oil and gas activity. In some cases, our children stayed home from school due to their symptoms. It would be negligent, in

fact, willful and wanton conduct, for you to allow continued oil and gas operations at this site until you can be certain that no further benzene exposure will occur. We as Coloradans still do not have the “basic guarantee” of our safety.

This site has been the center of controversy since its permits were approved in March 2017. This site was not supposed to be here, it was slated to be installed behind a more affluent school in Greeley, Frontier Academy. The Frontier parents were organized by Weld Air & Water, a group of mineral rights owners who were concerned by the proximity to the school. Extraction Oil & Gas (XOG) later decided that the site was “not ideal for oil and gas operations.” They then went on to prey on a more vulnerable community. The demographics of our community made it easy for XOG to come in and set up shop without a fight. Most of the students at Bella Romero are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The majority of our students are Latinx, refugees, and children of mixed-status parents.

Greeley parents, teachers and community groups have done everything we can to try and stop this site after it was moved to Bella Romero. We sued over the approval of the permits, we have repeatedly protested and pleaded with the COGCC to stop this site. The 24 wells [were featured on The Daily Show with Trevor Noah](#). The New York Times even wrote a [feature story](#) on the audacity of the project. The world is watching.

In the Spring of 2018, you visited our school, Governor Polis, and spoke with me personally. You said that parents like me shouldn't have to worry about their children's safety when it came to oil and gas, you all but said this kind of thing wouldn't happen if you were elected Governor. Your surrogates later went on to announce at the Weld County County Assembly that you were the only gubernatorial candidate that stood with the families of Bella Romero. We have heard nothing from you or your administration since.

I am lucky to have the ability to take a day off from work and stay at the Capitol until 2 am to testify - a job that I have almost lost because all of the time I have had to take off to attempt to protect my child from precisely what happened on November 5th. I shouldn't have to do that. I am a mother. My biggest concern should be how my child doing in math and reading.

There are short term effects and there are long term effects that will result from this. We have heard this story before, it is not new. Considering the climate platform and “be bold” motto that you choose for your election platform, I would hope you would have the foresight and awareness to address this issue head-on and prevent further harm to these children. Put an immediate stop to Extraction Oil and Gas's operation behind my child's school. This risk as it stands now is unacceptable. I encourage you both to visit the site, it has changed drastically since the last time you were here Governor Polis.

Respectfully,

Patricia Nelson

Supporting organizations: Adams County Communities for Drilling Accountability NOW (ACCDAN), Broomfield Active Moms Community, Broomfield Concerned, Broomfield CAN,

Be The Change USA, Climate Justice Ministry of Foothills Unitarian Church, Colorado Rising, Erie Protectors, Food & Water Watch Action, Front Range Residents for Environment, Safety, and Health (FRRESH), Larimer Alliance for Health Safety & the Environment, The Lookout Alliance, Mothers Out Front - Colorado, North Range Concerned Citizens, Our Health Our Future Our Longmont, Physicians for Social Responsibility Colorado, Wall of Women, Weld Air & Water, WildEarth Guardians, 350 Colorado