

Statement of Jonah Ramirez  
Clean Air Ambassador

Good morning. First of all, I would like to thank Senator Boxer for inviting me here to speak to you today. Anytime the Senator invites you to speak at her Hearing is quite an honor, but it is even more so when you're a sixth grader!

Today I am here to testify to you not as an eleven-year-old boy but as a victim; a victim of pollution. A victim of the air I breathe. A young boy who has been forced to grow up way too fast. I have asthma. I wasn't born with it; I developed it. I developed asthma by breathing dirty air. You see, the place I call home, the place where I have always felt safe, felt free to run around, play and be myself, received failing grades this year in almost all categories in the American Lung Association's State of the Air Report. With this said, I believe it is fair to state the laws we have now, the laws that we believe protect us, are way too lenient. Our current laws permit heavy exhaust, smoke and debris to be considered "safe." Safe? If these particles that I breathe every day are safe, then why do I depend on daily medication and the fast relief of my inhaler to do something that everyone has the right to do? **Breathe.**

Since I developed asthma, I have learned a lot about the air we all breathe. I have learned that we **all** need to do something because our air is making us sick. Breathing is a common bond we share; something we all do. It should not be something we have to think about, but the reality is, we do need to think about it. We need to change the way we see air quality. It is not just a topic on the news. It is affecting all of us. Our air is shortening our lives. It is shortening the lives of our children. Nearly 5 million Californians suffer from asthma. **5 million.**

Over the past 5 years, I have testified at the AQMD urging lawmakers to change laws regarding air quality. I have testified at an EPA Hearing in San Francisco and, more recently, one in Los Angeles asking legislators to make drastic changes in the guidelines regarding air quality. I have spoken to the press on numerous occasions expressing my concern for people, especially children, all over the world who are forced to breathe such unacceptable air. I have appeared on TV twice sharing my knowledge of asthma and air quality and the relationship that, **unfortunately**, they share. In April, I introduced our Governor at the Small World Asthma Conference in Anaheim. Now today, I speak to you at the same hearing as Senator Barbara Boxer.

Look at me. I am a face of asthma..... But not just asthma. I have become the face of the asthma/ air quality relationship. I am the face of our future. Our future if our laws remain unchanged. I am a direct product of our environment. An environment that we helped create and now we need to repair.

Everyone of us needs to take steps to reduce air pollution. I have and I am eleven. **Together, let's make my dream of breathing clean, pollutant-free air a reality.**

I thank you, from the bottom of my lungs.