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Hello. My name is Eliana and I am an incoming high school junior in Lake County, IL. I am here today to urge the Illinois Pollution Control Board to live up to its responsibility of protecting the people of Illinois by strengthening coal ash rules and promoting environmental justice. I first want to talk about the situation in Waukegan.

Waukegan is home to over a third of all the Superfund sites in IL. The Waukegan Generating Station, which is one of the oldest coal plants in the country, has two active unlined coal ash ponds along with an unlined landfill that pollute not only groundwater, but also 10 million people's drinking water source: Lake Michigan. The coal ash ponds and landfill make the Waukegan Generating Station the largest source of air and water pollution in Lake County.

This is significantly impacting the health of the people of Waukegan. Toxic heavy metals such as arsenic, boron, chromium, lithium, and sulfate are leached into the groundwater through the coal ash pond and landfill, causing concentrations much higher than the safe level. These toxic metals have many negative health effects, including cancer. **This pollution is impacting the health of people right now and will continue to contaminate for centuries.** The rules you have the power to enact will determine the level of pollution to which my generation has to endure, directly impacting my generation's health.

It is not an accident that these disastrous impacts from coal ash are happening in Waukegan, where the population is almost 75% Black and Latinx. The prominence of fossil fuel plants and pollution in communities of color is a pattern perpetuated across Illinois and the country. The same harmful substance that is destroying the planet and causing the climate crisis – fossil fuels – is also disproportionately harming the health of low-income communities and communities of color. This makes pollution and coal ash regulations, a racial justice issue.

As the Illinois Pollution Control Board, you have the power to help the millions of people living in environmental justice communities like Waukegan. Ensuring that communities get permanent protection from pollution means prohibiting mixing coal ash and water, and regulating coal ash dumps and landfills as well as ponds. **In addition, workers and communities must be protected from the health effects of coal ash dust. I strongly urge you to stand with the people of Waukegan and communities over profit and polluting industries by strengthening coal ash regulations.** Thank you.