It’s Not Just the Odor: Faith & Community Fact-Finding Delegation to Bristol, Virginia Report

April 27, 2022
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Acknowledgments

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Sincerest thanks to the advocates across the state speaking up for the land, the trees, the water, and the people negatively impacted by landfills and inadequate waste management programs.

About Virginia Interfaith Power & Light (VAIPL)

Virginia Interfaith Power & Light collaborates among people of faith and conscience to grow healthy communities by advancing climate and environmental justice. Virginia Interfaith Power & Light envisions overcoming the climate crisis, eradicating environmental and social injustices, and living in a just, thriving, and equitable world. For more information, visit vaipl.org.
Executive Summary

On March 29th, 2022, faith leaders traveled from across the state to Bristol, VA, for a Community and Faith Leaders Fact-Finding Delegation. Sixteen representatives from Newport News, Hampton, Petersburg, Richmond, Greenville, and Roanoke traveled to Bristol City, Virginia. They met with representatives from southwest regions of the state, swelling the number to forty attendees.

Virginia Interfaith Power & Light (VAIPL) sponsored this visit with the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter as a co-sponsor. VAIPL was invited by the Bristol Area Ministers Alliance (BAMA) and First Baptist Church of Bristol hosted the delegation. The gathering was an opportunity to demonstrate solidarity with Bristol faith leaders and address social and environmental justice problems related to the Bristol City Landfill. Mega landfills, like the Bristol City Landfill, leak particulate matter, methane, and benzene, among other toxins, which often lead to higher rates of asthma, respiratory disease, and cardiovascular disease.¹

Community members told stories of the adverse health and quality of life impacts of the daily toxic emissions. Delegates Israel O'Quinn and William Wampler updated the group about their efforts to secure financing to assist the city of Bristol in resolving the foul gas emissions. The Faith Delegation then toured the landfill and neighborhoods, stopping at an elementary school near the landfill to hear from the District Superintendent.

The emissions issue in Bristol is an egregious example of environmental injustice. In Bristol City, Virginia, residents nearest the landfill are the elderly, low-wealth, and black and brown communities. The daily gas inundation falls upon Highland View Elementary, one of the oldest elementary schools in the area, and Highland Juvenile Detention Center, only yards from the landfill and the older low-wealth neighborhoods on the Virginia side.

The delegation summarized the following conclusions to remedy the issues related to the landfill:

- Full transparency by the city administration and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) of “expert panel” report findings to residents
- Consistent communications by the city administration and DEQ with open forums
- Immediate mitigation efforts for community residents experiencing symptoms and quality of life disruptions
- Plans for the expeditious closing of the landfill and remediation of the ongoing gas emissions
- Funding to support the relief efforts for residents (i.e., air purifiers, respite weekends, or support for relocations from the community, federal, and state entities)
- Emergency relocating of children held at the Highlands Juvenile detention center and its closure
- Emergency relocation of the Highland View Elementary student population

Foreword

We are people driven by faith to uphold a vision of the intrinsic worth of our lives together on this glorious planet. We value shared abundance, neighborly love, and the sacredness of the environment beyond its economic usefulness to build wealth for some. We condemn the decision to place a toxin emitting mega landfill within city limits where residents live, work, and play. We recognize that the current city administration is not responsible for the decision to host a mega landfill. Still, they do bear the burden of rectifying the problem to the satisfaction of the two communities (Bristol, Virginia, and Bristol, Tennessee).

In a world guided by private interests, complex systems of power, and transactional political leadership, it is easy for those in power to lose sight of their responsibility to the most vulnerable. It is also easy for those in need to accept the aggressively promoted narratives and false claims about economic growth and jobs. Too few realize the promised financial benefit in most cases, and the jobs never materialize. These tired tropes and claims are taken as logical solutions by communities hungry for opportunity or even as desirable, especially in the absence of an alternative perspective. It is the duty of people of faith to both shine a light on what is corrupt, false, and destructive and to lift an alternative paradigm and practical solutions derived from many different faith and wisdom traditions.

This principle honoring all life holds loving your neighbor paramount and envisions abundance, health, and dignity for all members of the human community and the ecosystems on which humans depend. That means, at a minimum, clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, and a healthy environment that supports life with equitable access to medical, transportation, and non-polluting energy sources. However, the Bristol City Landfill threatens the fundamental human rights to clean water, air, and the environment.

Before we visited Bristol, we circulated a faith leader’s sign-on letter addressed to Congressman Griffith, Senator Warner, Senator Kaine, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The letter requests the attention and support from the elected representative political leadership of the state to remedy the landfill problem as an urgent issue and threat to the health of Bristol City Residents. See the sign-on letter here. We hope that this report shines a light on the environmental injustice and the Bristol community’s experiences that are impacted by the landfill.

Kendyl Crawford
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Co-Directors, Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Background

Bristol, Virginia is a twin city sharing a border with Bristol, Tennessee. The population is under twenty thousand and the median income is approximately 39,000 annually for a family. The area was the traditional land of the Cherokee peoples. Located in the far southwest region of the state known for the production of limestone and manganese, it is a small but quaint city off of Interstate 81. Bristol claims the birthplace of country music and its motto “a nice place to live” suggests a thriving community. But for some the existence of a quarry landfill in the heart of the city, Bristol is a difficult place to live.

Since 1998, the Bristol City Landfill has threatened the air and groundwater quality of Bristol city residents. A municipal solid waste landfill (MSWLF) is a discrete area of land or excavation that receives household waste. Solid waste landfills, like the one in Bristol City, also receive other types of waste, such as commercial waste, tires, demolition, debris, rock, dirt, concrete, brush, and yard waste. Virginia has roughly 74 solid waste landfills\(^2\). Landfills create methane and other types of gas that bubble up to the surface and release into the air.\(^3\)

In some cases, when landfills are poorly managed, or the liners that are federally regulated for the landfill are not properly maintained, there can be leaks that can easily threaten groundwater, ultimately damaging ecosystems and water sources for those who rely on the groundwater for their private wells.\(^4\) Landfills can also lead to negative health impacts for those living nearby resulting in various conditions like skin irritation, asthma, coughing, recurring cases of flu and stomach pains, asthma, and other respiratory conditions.\(^5\) In the case of the Bristol City Landfill, the delayed maintenance is made worse by the proximity of the quarry landfill to an environmental justice community and a juvenile detention center only yards away from the landfill. One of the oldest elementary schools in Bristol is also downwind of the quarry emissions.


\(^3\) Environmental Protection Agency, “Basic Information about Landfill Gas”, March 2022, https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas


\(^5\) Ibid
The EPA’s Environmental Justice mapper pictured above shows the health impacts of the landfill are being disproportionately carried by communities of color and poor white people (with incomes under $25,000 a year, less than high school education) who live around the quarry landfill. The negative impacts of the landfill are also being carried by the handicapped and residents who have inadequate access to health care.

Clean air is a fundamental human right. It is especially vital for children and the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of inhaling toxic pollutants. The Bristol City Landfill violates this right as it exposes residents in Bristol City, VA, and Bristol, TN to leaking pollutants such as methane gas, benzene, and additional toxic volatile organic compounds (VOCs). In 2021, air samples were collected around the Bristol landfill and analyzed by Wilma Subra, a Louisiana-based chemist who is president of Subra Co., a chemistry lab and environmental consulting firm. These samples were used to complete a risk analysis and to measure and quantify the cumulative health and exposure impacts on the communities near the landfill. The report states “based on the Volatile Organic Compounds detected in the air at two locations tested by Pace Analytical and three locations tested by Commonwealth of Virginia, Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services” some of the top findings from the report underline alarming toxic pollutants degrading air quality including benzene, toluene, and xylene.

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7 ibid
From the analysis, it was concluded that “a total of 25 Volatile Organic Compounds were detected in the ambient air at five sampled locations in association with the Bristol Landfill. The individuals in the area of the landfill are being exposed to 25 individual volatile organic compounds and are constantly being exposed to Benzene, Ethylbenzene, Toluene, o-Xylene, and 1,2,4-Trimethylbenzene. The cumulative impacts of exposure and health impacts associated with up to 25 volatile organic compounds and a host of other chemicals that were not tested for, that were potentially present in the ambient air community members are breathing, have the potential to result in extensive cumulative acute health impacts and long term cumulative health impacts due to chronic exposure.”

In addition to Benzene, Ethylbenzene, Toluene and Xylenes, 20 additional volatile organic compounds were detected in the air at some of the five sampling locations. One of the pollutants from the landfill that was detected in high numbers is benzene. Benzene is “a known human cancer-causing agent and was detected at all five sampling locations and in the highest concentration of any volatile compound at four of the five sampling locations.” The acute health impacts of benzene include irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, and throat, coughing, wheezing, headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness, nausea, and vomiting. Moreover, the chronic health impacts of benzene have been associated with cancers like leukemia. From the report, there were a number of other toxic compounds mentioned with the following studied health impacts from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Irritation of eye and nose
- Tiredness and muscle fatigue
- Confusion, dizziness, and headaches
- Anxiety and insomnia
- Nerve damage
- Inflammation of the skin
- Liver and kidney damage
- Mucous membrane
- Dermatitis
- Narcosis
- Coma

Another concern is what community members might refer to as the softening of the issue with the language used by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and city officials about the emissions as an “odor problem” rather than a toxic emission and air quality issue. Concerned citizens and faith leaders are not confident that those in leadership among these groups understand the

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8 Ibid
9 Ibid
10 Ibid
12 Ibid
urgency to act swiftly and decisively to resolve the emissions. Members of the BAMA and HOPE for Bristol have been meeting and organizing to seek redress from the city administration, DEQ, and the EPA since 2021, when the gas emissions became unbearable for many residents.

These emissions can cause physical symptoms, including respiratory, neurological, cardiac, hematological, gastrointestinal, and dermatological impacts and psychological effects resulting from the increasing frequency and exposure duration. H.O.P.E. Bristol conducted a door-to-door symptoms survey (results pictured to the left) to gather data related to the health and physical symptoms residents were experiencing.

H.O.P.E for Bristol completed the symptoms survey in 252 households, with 653 individuals. The survey results (pictured above) show that out of the 653 individual survey participants, seventy-nine percent of individuals reported burning irritation in their eyes, noses, and throats. Seventy percent of surveyed individuals reported symptoms of sinus congestion, and sixty-six percent of individuals reported headaches and migraines. Fatigue, disruptive sleep patterns, and trouble breathing were also common symptoms.

The community understands that there is no quick fix to this complex and challenging problem. One concern from community members is the role city leaders play in their silence on the issues related to landfill emissions. City officials have indicated that they need support from the Department of Environmental Quality and the federal Environmental Protection Agency to remedy the problem. However, community members are frustrated by what appears to be some reluctance from the city administration to be fully transparent about the issue.
While some residents of the twin cities attended the Faith and Community Religious Fact-Finding Delegation to Bristol, a few shared their personal stories and the current impacts of the landfill on their lives with the clergy and faith leaders who gathered from across the state.

Rev. Steven L. Davis and Mrs. Lillian Davis

First of the residents to speak was Rev. Steven L. Davis Sr, President of Brothers for Christ Community Response (pictured left), who began his testimony with the proclamation, “Today I stand as a representative of the oppressed.” Rev. Davis expressed how he and his family have been negatively impacted by the landfill both physically and mentally. Living next to the facility, he and his family developed a long list of symptoms due to the pollution and the toxic odor, including burning eyes and runny noses. These symptoms would sometimes force his family to leave their home and escape the fumes from the landfill.

Rev. Steven continued by saying that “When [his] family lived on Tracey St, [his] children were constantly sick and told they had upper respiratory infections or allergies,” symptoms that became less severe after moving away from the landfill. Although the Davis family and others had been experiencing these symptoms for years, he was told that “this is just the way it is,” which later fueled his desire to speak out against the landfill and the inequities within the community.

When attending one of the first meetings to organize actions to take against the landfill, Rev. Davis shared his concerns that few of the members in the room looked like him. He is passionate about getting Black communities most impacted to stand up to close the landfill to preserve the health of his loved ones and community and ensure that they no longer have to bear this burden.
Mrs. Lillian Davis, the mother of Rev. Stephen Davis Sr. (pictured left), spoke about her experiences as she still lives close to the landfill.

Mrs. Davis has lived near the landfill, which she named “The Beast,” for 17 years. Like Rev. Stephen, she expressed having multiple symptoms that have significantly affected her health and aggravated her existing health conditions like a burning nose, difficulty breathing, and her vision worsening. On the morning of the fact-finding delegation, Mrs. Davis had doubts about whether she would make the event because the air quality in her home inhibited her breathing.

Rev. Dr. Jackie Nophlin

Rev. Dr. Jackie Nophlin, a pastor at Household of Faith Community Church, was the last to share how the landfill has threatened the health of her and her family. She also shared how the landfill has disproportionately impacted the quality of life for low-income and Black households in the community.

Due to the emissions and pollution from the landfill, many Bristol residents make changes to daily routines and traditions to manage the negative impacts. For example, some Bristol residents attend church less frequently to
avoid the foul smell. Jackie and her daughter, Erica Nophlin, also suffer from preexisting medical conditions. The air quality issues from the landfill present severe threats to their well-being, often exacerbating her daughter’s fibromyalgia and lupus, causing more flare-ups than usual.

“For years, the people living around the landfill have complained. It wasn't until the smells and gasses reached the nostrils of the middle class across the state line in our sister city, Bristol, TN, that our neighbors raised alarms. An old proverb says, "How seldom we weigh our neighbor in the same balance with ourselves." She feels that nobody should endure air pollution that causes health problems and lessens life spans. No ethnic group or the poor should be "sacrificed" because they are considered disposable by some.

She expanded on her feelings, saying that “it is disheartening to know that Black/Brown and low-income citizens are continuously subjected to the worst living conditions. The health and well-being of these residents went unconsidered during the planning of the landfill's location.” Now, residents suffer from nosebleeds, burning eyes, sore throats, headaches, upper respiratory infections, etc. The suffering goes on. “The communities surrounding the landfill weren't considered then and aren't considered now.” They were told, "if it smells that bad and harms your children, then move!" “But moving is a luxury for some.”
Presentations

An integral component of the Fact-Finding Delegation was the presentations given by community organizers, state officials, and local elected officials. Below, see presentation summaries of the Bristol Landfill and ongoing mitigation efforts to address the negative health impacts of the landfill by state leaders and impacted community members.

State Legislators Delegate Israel O’Quinn & Delegate William C. Wampler discussed the expert panel convened by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to address concerns stemming from the Bristol Landfill. The panel will assist the city in addressing residents who have complained of the odor. Delegate Wampler echoed that “our plan will take seriously recommendations coming from the panel and will they be followed. The panel experts are very smart technical people, and I am confident there will be a solution.”

Delegate O’Quinn & Delegate Wampler emphasized that the landfill issue warrants the General Assembly to allocate funds dedicated to mitigation efforts. They also promised to ensure adherence to the expert panel’s recommendations and the funding. Delegate O’Quinn said, “I have never had Tennessee residents reaching out to me since I have been in the office – except for recently on this issue – It is one city; state lines don’t affect the [impacts] of the landfill; sometimes you smell it in Virginia, and sometimes in Tennessee.”

Chad Martin, the Environmental Justice Coordinator, assigned to the Bristol region by the Department of Environmental Quality, emphasized his support for impacted Bristol residents, assuring that he and other regional representatives from the DEQ will be working diligently to address the issue.
Dan Firth, Tennessee Chapter Issue Chair on Solid Waste for the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, reemphasized, “the people of Bristol, VA and Tennessee are suffering from pollution and not just odor.” He urged that now is the time to find a solution and to adopt safer practices to manage waste.

Rev. Dr. Sam Weddington, Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian Church Bristol, reviewed the health impacts of the landfill and the symptoms residents are experiencing. He also highlighted H.O.P.E for Bristol’s survey on community symptoms, revealing how the landfill has negatively impacted the health of the children and the elderly. Referencing the air monitoring tests done as a part of the Air Sample and Wilma Subram’s Risk Analysis, Rev. Weddington expressed his concerns about Bristol's air quality and how it is harmful to the residents breathing in toxic air. Furthermore, he stated that “Disproportionately, the poor are suffering. Disproportionately this is falling on the most vulnerable in our communities on the frontlines; people of color and low-income families who cannot afford to deal with symptoms and their consequences.”

He continued pointing out inequities related to the negative impacts of the facility, underlining that lower-income communities are easily targeted and silenced. Specifically stating, “You go to places where people are not empowered, or people will not notice, industry and corporations will come in and site things like the Bristol City Landfill purposefully.” He queried those in attendance as to
whether the quarry landfill proposed in 1998 would have been proposed for Bristol's predominately white and affluent areas would have been possible, to which the audience quickly responded no.

Rev. Weddington also shared more about the effort he and the community partners have led in distributing air purifiers to impacted residents who may not be able to afford the high costs of air purifiers. As they approach their 9th round of donations, the church will officially have donated 1,000 air purifiers. Through this program and partnerships in the community, they have provided relief, with distributed retail purifier costs valuing almost $1.5 million. Rev. Sam Weddington urges aid from local elected officials stating that “it is time for Bristol, VA to join us in the fight to help us bring relief to Bristol residents. We can do weatherization projects and air purifiers, raise funds to donate and even pay for someone’s hotel when they need relief. These are things that we can do. And I’m calling on leadership in Virginia and Tennessee to help us remediate those practical impacts.”

Kidest Gebre, Communicating Our Power Fellow and Organizing Coordinator, and Leah Jones, the Education Coordinator from Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, discussed the environmental justice implications of the landfill in greater depth. She suggested that the air quality issue is intersectional as the landfill harms specific residents at greater risk, like children exposed to the fumes housed at the neighboring juvenile detention center. The advocates also spoke about landfills and their dangers to communities, especially when considering vulnerable populations. Research shows that 79 percent of municipal solid waste incinerators are located in environmental justice (EJ) communities, revealing that environmental justice communities like Bristol frequently bear the burden of enduring negative impacts from polluting industries like landfills.
Impacted Area Tour

The tour, guided by Sam Weddington, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Bristol, TN, lasted approximately two hours. On the impacted area tour, the delegation visited some of the most vulnerable locations related to the landfill. Highland View Elementary, the Highlands Juvenile Detention Center, and the Bristol City Landfill were all stops on tour. Below, the tour stops are in bold, along with notes and observations while on the visit.

Tour of Highland View Elementary & Affected Community
Highland View Elementary is one of the oldest elementary schools in Virginia. It has 191 students and is 1.6 miles away from the landfill, making it the closest school to the facility. The school superintendent, Dr. Keith Parrington, believes that though Highland View is the nearest school to the landfill, they have not had any issues outside of a complaint made earlier this year. According to the superintendent, the schools in Bristol, TN, are experiencing the effects of the landfill more severely, particularly with the odor from the landfill.

The superintendent suggested that the school’s issues with air quality resulted from the school’s age and physical infrastructure; however, many parents have expressed their concerns to BAMA about the adverse effects coming from the landfill being felt by their children. Parrington assured that the air quality issues improved after the school invested in technology called bipolar ionization, which helps purify the air and enhance air quality. Parrington also reported that asthma outbreaks and related breathing problems have improved since the installation.

The superintendent also shared that the school board and city council of Bristol, VA, have voted to consolidate the three elementary schools in the community and build a new school. Highland View Elementary will soon be knocked down and reconstructed farther away from the landfill, right off exit 7 in Bristol. Lastly, it is essential to note that any air quality complaints from the staff or students of Highland View Elementary are real and officially documented.
Tour of the Landfill Site
The next stop on tour was the Bristol City Landfill itself. The facility is currently 17 acres and was built in 1996 and began operation in 1998. This landfill is also one of the only four quarry landfills in the United States and has accumulated 85 complaints from neighboring residents thus far and counting.

While on tour, impacted residents shared how the landfill affects their daily lives, especially considering the socioeconomic status and structure of the homes close to the landfill. Specifically, the residents have observed that many of the older homes nearby are not well insulated and lack proper weatherization. These conditions allow leaked gas and odor from the landfill to enter their homes more efficiently, while homes in the Forest Hill area, a middle-class neighborhood, have newer homes that have the structure to keep the odor out.

Tour of the Highlands Juvenile Detention Center
The Highlands Juvenile Detention Center is only a mile away from the Bristol City Landfill, leaving children from all over the Commonwealth to endure the odors and harmful fumes emitted from the landfill. Community faith leader Sam Weddington stated that through the service program that his church hosts, they learned that many youths there are teens, with some of the youngest being nine years old. Many children are housed for one to two weeks, but in some cases, for months. For the duration of their stay, these children are constantly inhaling the toxic emissions from the landfill.
Delegation Recommendations and Conclusion

The Community & Faith Leaders Fact-Finding Delegation to Bristol City, Virginia, concluded with a discussion among the attendees and community members reflecting on the day's experiences and information gained. One central point that reverberated throughout the conversation was the sacred right of every person to breathe clean air, to live in peace in their homes, and have elected leaders demonstrate concern for their general well-being. Attendees entered into a brainstorming and debriefing session. They reflected on the causes of their concerns, summarized actions taken thus far, and expressed their frustrations about city leaders and administrations' lack of communication or transparency.

Requesting solutions, Rev. Jackie suggested that “the question now is whether Bristol, TN residents, and leaders are willing to balance the needs of their neighbors who live near the landfill on the Virginia side? Are they ready to advocate for the profound changes needed for the landfill and other local social, economic, and environmental issues? We need to provide air purifiers to as many as possible. They will give some comfort, some rest, and some relief inside the homes of the elderly and those with small children, giving rest to working parents. We need to help those who cannot help themselves during this crisis. We continue to search for ways to help tolerate the poisonous air pollution until the experts prove that what they are doing is the correct thing to do, but more importantly, the just thing to do.”

She prayed that the city council members would continue searching for the answer. “The gasses and odors coming from the landfill are hurting people physically and mentally, with those living in impoverished areas of our city facing the worst of the gases. We need our neighbors in Bristol, TN, to stand with us, not against us. Whether you live near or far, the constant smoldering gases will continue to disrupt the lives of residents unless the experts recommend a successful plan. We must fix the problem, then close it.”

Rev. Dr. Sam Weddington reminded the delegation that the ministerial alliance had distributed air purifiers totaling approximately $1.5 million to impacted residents. His church is collecting the funds that the First Presbyterian Bristol Tennessee received from churches, individuals, and discounts provided by the manufacturer. He ended his statement with, “It is time for Bristol, City administration, and the state of Virginia to join us in the fight to help us bring relief to Bristol residents. We can do weatherization projects and provide air purifiers to every impacted resident, along with replacement filters. We call on the state of Virginia to help us relieve the suffering of its citizens.”

Rev. Dr. Kris Aaron expressed frustration with the lack of transparency from the city administration and that they are operating behind closed doors. One possible path to a solution is to connect the air quality issue to economic issues. “Putting the morality issues aside, people seem to only care about money. Why would folks spend their dollars to visit a place that stinks? The fumes emitting from the landfill are a huge loss for economic development.” He made the point that everyone is starting to
become affected by this landfill even in nicer neighborhoods. Responding to why so few Bristol, VA residents are speaking out he said “Additionally, we need to understand that some folks are deterred to say anything because of possible repercussions, some residents who were suffering in silence out of concerns about retaliation from neighbors, employers, and others with power. Just because something doesn’t affect you personally, it does not mean that you shouldn’t do something about it. This is not a partisan issue, this is a people issue.”

The contamination coming from the landfill is a threat to the health and dignity of the residents of Bristol and the children at the Juvenile Detention Center. It is important that all persons of good conscience stand in solidarity with the communities of Bristol, VA, and Bristol, TN for their health and safety concerns stemming from the presence of this massive landfill. Virginia Interfaith Power & Light has found that almost every faith tradition mandates caring for the Earth and our neighbors. The unrelieved suffering of residents of the twin cities of Bristol is an affront to the moral values promoted by these traditions. City, state, and federal leaders should be guided in their governing and policymaking.

On April 25, 2022, VA DEQ released the written report prepared by the expert panel convened to provide consensus recommendations “pertaining to 1) mitigation of odors emanating from the Landfill; 2) feasibility of continued waste disposal operations of the Landfill, and 3) options for early closure of the Landfill; either temporary or permanent.”

Residents are pleased by the initial findings and recommendations from the expert panel. Sam Weddington stated “The panel report is thorough, fair, and gives a viable path forward out of the current crisis.” The Bristol Area Ministerial Alliance members hope these recommendations are the beginning to the end of suffering for their constituents. As people of faith, values, and good conscience the delegation and community residents offer the following recommendations to the Bristol City administration, Virginia and Tennessee state and federal legislators, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Fact-Finding Delegation Recommendations for People of Faith:

Many faith leaders were unable to attend the delegation visit but want to support the efforts to remedy the problem. One good way is to write letters to the editor (LTE) or an OpEd highlighting the need for immediate action and support for B.A.M.A. and others seeking remediation from the emissions impacts. Help and guidance for writing and submitting LTEs and OpEds are available by emailing contactus@vaipl.org. VAIPL continues to collect petition signatures requesting attention, funding, and legislative action if necessary from legislators to help expedite the mitigation efforts by the city. Sign

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the petition here. The First Presbyterian Church of Bristol, TN, continues to collect donations for air purifiers for impacted residents. You may access the information to donate below.

1) Mail a check to First Presbyterian of Bristol, 701 Florida Ave, Bristol, TN 37620. Please write “Purifiers” in the memo.
2) Go online and give at https://onrealm.org/fpcbristol/-/form/give/default. Select “Minister’s Discretionary: Purifiers” from the drop menu.

Fact-Finding Delegation Recommendations:

**Full transparency** by the city administration and DEQ of “expert panel” report findings
Bristol city residents expressed great disappointment that the expert panel was not a transparent and open process with community participation. Since the release of the expert panel report, DEQ has been should host public forums for residents to explain and share recommendations and how they plan to follow guidelines.

**Consistent communications**
Residents request ongoing communications from the Bristol city administration and the DEQ to include open forums and public comment periods related to the landfill. Communications with impacted residents are essential to assuage their concerns about whether the city understands residents' urgency and level of suffering.

**Impact study**
The expert panel report suggests an information gap related to the landfill. “The Panel also identified key data gaps that prevent a clear diagnosis of conditions and subsurface reactions in the Landfill and verify the performance of proposed engineered mitigation actions.” Residents have reported various symptoms experienced by residents of the twin cities and appeal for further studies to ascertain what substances the emissions are exposing them to and how they can best mitigate the consequences to their health.

**Closure and Remediation**
Residents want to encourage the expeditious closing of the landfill and immediate remediation of the ongoing gas emissions.

**Funding**
Funding to support the immediate relief efforts employed to mitigate exposure to emissions by impacted residents is needed. Funding to purchase air purifiers, provide respite weekends, and in extreme cases, relocations—long-term projects for weatherization of older homes to buffer gasses entering through gaps in walls and windows.
**Emergency Relocation of Children in the Juvenile Detention Center**
The delegation recommends emergency relocation of children held at the Highlands Juvenile Detention Center until the remediation of the landfill is complete. The juvenile detention center is within yards of the Bristol City Landfill. Children at the center are subject to the emissions with no opportunity for relief. Their proximity raises several moral issues.

**Emergency Relocation of Highland View Students**
Emergency relocation is needed of the Highland View Elementary student population until the remediation of the landfill is complete or a suitable alternative school site is determined. The proximity of the elementary school places students’ overall well-being and ability to achieve academically and threatens their health.