FOR RELEASE:  Friday, June 19, 2020  Embargoed until 2 PM

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(Trenton) - Standing together six feet apart today, Governor Murphy, Lt. Governor Oliver, state legislative leaders, and NJ’s leading environmental justice advocates (listed above) announced their commitment to pass S232 (Singleton/McKeon), potentially the most protective environmental justice law in the country. The bill would give NJDEP the authority to deny permits due to cumulative impacts of pollution in environmental justice communities -- it’s been more than a decade in the making. This is a critical step towards ensuring that all residents of New Jersey, regardless of their zip code and color of their skin, have the right to good health, clean air, and safe waters. This is the moment of reckoning for racial and environmental justice in our country that makes it imperative to act.

"As we celebrate Juneteenth today and the freedom of Black people, it is necessary to free residents in front line communities, like mine, from the environmental and related health injustices we suffer each and everyday,” stated Kim Gaddy, Environmental Justice Organizer, Clean Water Action. "All three of my children are asthmatic and if S232 becomes law as written, the state will have the power to 'just say no more' polluting facilities in my neighborhood. Governor Murphy and Senator Singleton are not just demonstrating their commitment to S232, but building momentum for its passage, bringing us that much closer to having the strongest EJ law in the nation. Environmental justice (EJ) communities like mine have suffered for far too long because of the zip code we live in."

"The Ironbound Community in Newark has struggled for decades to fight against the unfair pollution burden harming residents' health. S232 gives our communities a fighting chance. It gives us a voice that says no more to the places that make it harder to breathe,” said Maria Lopez-Nuñez, Deputy Director, Organizing and Advocacy, Ironbound Community Corporation. “This bill is the realization of generations demanding environmental justice. We are proud to stand next to NJEJA and Clean Water Action, and thank Governor Murphy and Senator Singleton for putting S232 forth."

"We need legislation that addresses cumulative impacts in order to protect New Jersey environmental justice communities from disproportionate amounts of pollution,” said Nicky Sheats, Esq., Ph.D., New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance. “Cumulative impacts legislation that not only addresses this issue in an appropriate manner, but actually calls for the State to reject applications for pollution permits under certain circumstances, is critically important to the health of environmental justice communities and long overdue."

Key provisions of the bill are:

- Defines “overburdened communities” as those with significant non-white or low income populations.
- Requires major polluters seeking certain permits in overburdened communities to develop “Environmental Justice Impact Statements” with substantive detail, meaningful public input, and real DEP oversight including technical assistance to impacted communities.
- Empowers DEP to deny permits due to disproportionate impacts in overburdened communities.
Watch: Governor’s Live streamed event: https://youtu.be/pcsW3YN1Uii

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