OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

April 29, 2025

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
528 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
266 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: No IRIS Act of 2025 (S.B. 623 and H.R. 1415), and Potential Efforts to Dismantle the EPA's Office of Research and Development

Dear Esteemed Congressional Leaders:

We, the undersigned Attorneys General, write to urge you to *oppose* Senate Bill 623 (S. 623) and House Bill 1415 (H.R. 1415), which would prohibit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from using assessments generated by the Integrated Risk Information System

(IRIS) in regulatory actions and other processes. These assessments determine the human health risks of toxic chemicals through a rigorous scientific process.[1] We also urge you to oppose efforts to dismantle or reduce the EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD), the research arm of the EPA that provides the unbiased scientific foundation for protecting human health and the environment. Our states extensively rely on IRIS assessments and other research from ORD to take state actions to protect our residents from exposure to toxic chemicals that can lead to cancer and other devastating conditions.

The IRIS Program Protects the Environment and Human Health

The IRIS program targeted by S.B. 623 and H.R. 1415 is operated by EPA's Center for Public Health and Environmental Assessment within the ORD. This program assesses the toxicity values of various chemicals to determine the health risks that result from exposure, such as through breathing air pollution, drinking polluted water, and touching contaminated soil (which leads to ingestion of toxic chemicals).[2] IRIS assessments provide the fundamental scientific basis for the EPA to decide how to protect public health and inform regulations under the Clean Air Act (CAA), the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).[3] Program staff thoroughly and impartially analyze and integrate scientific data from multiple sources to develop the assessments.[4] Before an IRIS assessment is finalized, it is reviewed by experts in other federal agencies and also goes through public comment and independent external peer review processes, giving the public and other experts important opportunities to weigh in.[5] No other federal government agency provides this information or completes such a rigorous process to determine toxicity values. The EPA must be able to rely on IRIS assessments to make fact-based decisions that are informed by the best science available to protect human health and life – as required by numerous federal statutes protecting public health and welfare and the environment[6] – while also not setting limits that are unnecessarily burdensome for industry.[7]

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[1] *See* U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), *Basic Information About the Integrated Risk Information System*, https://www.epa.gov/iris/basic-information-about-integrated-risk-information-system.

[2] *See id; see also* EPA Office of Research and Development, *ORD Staff Handbook for Developing IRIS Assessments*, Dec. 2022, https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/iris_drafts/recordisplay.cfm?deid=356370#tab-3.

[3] EPA Office of Research and Development, *EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) Program: Report to Congress*, Jan. 2018, https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-02/documents/iris_report_to_congress_2018.pdf.

[4] EPA Office of Research and Development, *ORD Staff Handbook for Developing IRIS Assessments*, Dec. 2022, https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/iris_drafts/recordisplay.cfm?deid=356370#tab-3.

[5] EPA, *Basic Information About the Integrated Risk Information System*, https://www.epa.gov/iris/basic-information-about-integrated-risk-information-system#process.

[6] *See, e.g.*, Toxic Substances Control Act, 15 U.S.C.A. § 2625(h)(requiring the EPA to employ scientific information and tools "in a manner consistent with the best available science" to assess the risk of chemicals to human health and the environment); Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C.A. § 7408(2)(requiring the EPA to use "the latest scientific knowledge" in issuing air quality criteria for an air pollutant); Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C.A. § 300g-1(b)(3)(requiring the EPA to use "the best available, peer-reviewed science" when developing safe drinking water standards).

[7] Indeed, there have been instances where the EPA has conducted IRIS re-assessments that led states to revisit restrictions that may have been overly burdensome. For example, in a 2017 reassessment of benzo[a]pyrene (BaP), the EPA determined that BaP was less carcinogenic than previously thought, increasing Washington's risk-based levels for BaP and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (cPAHs) by an order of magnitude. This resulted

States and state agencies benefit directly from IRIS assessments. Specifically, states frequently rely on IRIS assessments to protect their residents from environmental harm and harm to human health. For example, the Illinois Pollution Control Board incorporates IRIS assessments into its regulations, including in its classification of toxic air contaminants as "carcinogens,"[8] in evaluating the risk to human health posed by environmental conditions and developing remediation objectives that achieve acceptable risk levels,[9] and in setting the allowable values of certain contaminants in soil.[10] Similarly, North Carolina relies upon IRIS assessments in its development of health-based values and environmental standards for surface water and groundwater remediation,[11] as well as in determining appropriate corrective action for cleanup of toxic pollutants.[12] Washington's regulations implementing the Model Toxics Control Act[13] identifies IRIS as the preferred source for toxicity values used to determine whether a cleanup site requires mitigation to protect human health.[14]

In New York, IRIS chemical-specific toxicity assessments and toxicity values are critical for the New York State Department of Health to evaluate chemical exposures in the environment. IRIS assessments routinely serve as the starting point for the department's development of recommendations for a variety of health-protective environmental guidelines (*e.g.*, short-term and annual guidelines for air, ambient water quality values, soil cleanup objectives) and regulations (*e.g.*, maximum contaminant levels in drinking water). IRIS assessments are also used to inform health risk management decisions and health risk communication when environmental sampling indicates that exposures to the public are occurring. New York's Department of Environmental Conservation also relies on IRIS assessments as a source of hazard information in helping to protect children from toxic chemicals in children's products. The loss of IRIS assessments would create significant information gaps for these programs.

IRIS assessments are also key to the administration of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control's (DTSC's) Site Mitigation Risk Program. The California Toxicity Criteria Rule requires that human health risk assessments, risk-based screening levels, and remediation goals prepared pursuant to California's Hazardous Substances Account Act are based on a specified hierarchy of toxicity criteria.[15] DTSC uses over 1,400 cancer and non-cancer toxicity values for over 800 chemicals. Approximately 500 of these values are from IRIS, representing the largest single-source of toxicity data used for this purpose.[16]

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in a significant decrease in scope, time, and cost of site cleanups. Because these chemicals are ubiquitous in the environment in Washington, this change impacted a large number of sites across the state.

[8] *See* 35 Ill. Adm. Code § 232.320.

[9] *See* 35 Ill. Adm. Code § 742.100 and § 742.210 (incorporating IRIS by reference).

[10] *See* 35 Ill. Adm. Code § 1100.605(c).

[11] *See, e.g.*, 15A NCAC 02B .0208 (surface water standards); 15 A NCAC 02L .0202 (groundwater standards).

[12] *See* 15A NCAC 2L .0411 (underground storage tank cleanup); 15A NCAC 2S .0500 (dry-cleaning solvent cleanup).

[13] *See* Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 70A.305.010 *et seq.*

[14] *See* Wash. Admin. Code 173-340-708.

[15] *See* Cal. Code Regs., tit. 22, § 68400.5 et seq., Cal. Health & Saf. Code § 78000 et seq.

[16] *See* DTSC's Human Health Risk Assessment Note 10, https://dtsc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2019/02/HHRA-Note-10-2019-02-25.pdf.

States also benefit from the EPA's reliance on IRIS assessments. The IRIS assessment for ethylene oxide, updated in 2016 based on new research that demonstrated that the carcinogenicity was 30 times higher than previously believed,[17] was essential for helping the State protect residents in Willowbrook, Illinois and the neighboring communities from severe adverse health effects from this carcinogen. The EPA relied on the IRIS assessment for ethylene oxide in developing the National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA), which showed that the cancer risk for persons in Willowbrook living and working near a commercial medical sterilizer was significant.[18] In response, Illinois enacted legislation to dramatically reduce the allowable levels of ethylene oxide emissions from commercial sterilization facilities in Illinois.[19] Notably, if H.R. 1415 and S. 623 are enacted, the EPA would be unable to rely on IRIS assessments in developing future NATA data, taking away a valuable resource for states to identify and mitigate risks to their residents.

ORD Provides Necessary Support to the EPA and to States

ORD, established by Congress in 1978,[20] is the independent scientific research arm of the EPA and provides the Agency with the knowledge and scientific basis it needs to protect human life, improve environmental and public health outcomes, and minimize the negative impacts of environmental pollutants.[21] Without the scientific support from ORD, EPA would have difficulty making knowledgeable and informed decisions in its policies and programs, with potentially disastrous public health outcomes. ORD contains several divisions that conduct necessary scientific research to keep Americans safe. For example, the Center for Environmental Solutions and Emergency Response (CESER) conducts research on how to safeguard public water systems and remediate contaminated soil from threats due to terrorism or natural disasters, among other duties.[22] The Atmospheric and Environmental Systems Modeling Division (AESMD) researches how contaminants in the air interact with the environment, as well as how to cost-effectively protect air quality.[23] The Center for Public Health and Environmental Assessment (CPHEA) studies the intricate relationship between humans and nature, the impact of environmental contaminants on health and ecosystems, and the methods necessary to evaluate scientific

[17] *See* EPA IRIS, *Ethylene Oxide*, https://iris.epa.gov/ChemicalLanding/&substance_nmbr=1025; Comments of the Attorneys General of Illinois, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin, June 27, 2023, https://stateimpactcenter.org/files/AGActions_IL-AGO-et-al-EtO-NESHAP-Comment.pdf.

[18] *See* EPA IRIS, *Ethylene Oxide*, https://iris.epa.gov/ChemicalLanding/&substance_nmbr=1025; Comments of the Attorneys General of Illinois, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin, June 27, 2023, https://stateimpactcenter.org/files/AGActions_IL-AGO-et-al-EtO-NESHAP-Comment.pdf.

[19] Illinois Public Act 101-22, amending the Illinois Environmental Protection Act to add a new Section 9.16, 415 ILCS 5/9.16.

[20] Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978, Public Law 95-155, Sec. 6(a) (Nov. 8, 1977, codified at 42 U.S.C. § 4363).

[21] EPA, *About the Office of Research and Development (ORD)*, https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-research-and-development-ord.

[22] EPA, *About the Center for Environmental Solutions and Emergency Response (CESER)*, https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-center-environmental-solutions-and-emergency-response-ceser.

[23] EPA, *About the Atmospheric and Environmental Systems Modeling Division*, https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-atmospheric-and-environmental-systems-modeling-division.

information and make sound policy decisions.[24] The Center for Computational Toxicology and Exposure (CCTE) provides solutions-driven research to efficiently evaluate risks to human health and the environment from chemical exposure.[25] CCTE also ensures that the freshwater environment, including rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands, and aquifers, can support human well-being.[26] ORD additionally conducts research regarding microplastics and plastic pollution[27] and is coordinating with states and across EPA offices and federal agencies to understand and mitigate the impacts of wildfire smoke on human health.[28]

ORD's EcoRisk Portal further promotes government efficiency. The multi-purpose tool provides the only one-stop, searchable access to the EPA's ecological risk assessment authorities, regulations, policies, guidelines, training, and technical resources. This tool, available for use by all states and the general public, supports ecological risk assessors in their day-to-day efforts to conduct technically sophisticated assessments that meet EPA requirements. EcoRisk and related guidance provide essential data and analysis regarding highly technical issues. The tool was curated by the EPA's Risk Assessment Forum, with peer review by EPA scientists, federal agencies and the private sector.[29]

ORD has research centers or offices in Gulf Breeze, Florida; Athens, Georga; Duluth, Minnesota; Research Triangle Park, North Carolina; Edison, New Jersey; Cincinnati, Ohio; Ada, Oklahoma; Corvallis and Newport, Oregon; Narragansett, Rhode Island; and Washington, D.C.[30] These centers employ hundreds of people and contain state-of-the-art research facilities. A reduction in force that results in a loss of the talent of these dedicated civil servants and allows these facilities to sit empty or operate below their full capacity would be a significant waste.

Not only is ORD necessary to support the broader work of the EPA, it is also indispensable for states. ORD provides integral scientific and technical resources to states, including training and support that is needed to protect human health and the environment. For example, in Illinois, elevated levels of lead were found in drinking water in the Village of University Park in 2019 after the water utility supplier changed the source of the community's drinking water and began adding a polyphosphate treatment that resulted in the removal of protective scale in residential plumbing. ORD provided valuable technical support to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) in reviewing corrosion control studies and

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[24] EPA, *About the Center for Public Health and Environmental Assessment (CPHEA)*, https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-center-public-health-and-environmental-assessment-cphea.
[25] EPA, *About the Center for Computational Toxicology and Exposure (CCTE)*, https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-center-computational-toxicology-and-exposure-ccte.
[26] *Id*.
[27] EPA, *Microplastics Research*, https://www.epa.gov/water-research/microplastics-research.
[28] EPA, EPA's Research Efforts to Protect Public and Environmental Health from Wildland Fire Smoke. https://www.epa.gov/perspectives/epas-research-efforts-protect-public-and-environmental-health-wildland-fire-smoke; Environmental Research Institute of the States, U.S. EPA Highlights Collaborations with State Partners, https://www.eristates.org/tag/wildfire/.
[29] EPA *EcoRisk Portal* https://www.epa.gov/risk/ecorisk-portal.
[30] EPA, *About the Office of Research and Development*, https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-research-and-development-ord#oc.

evaluating optimal corrosion control treatment recommendations. Such support was crucial in aiding Illinois EPA's efforts to ensure safe drinking water for University Park's residents.

California's DTSC relies on ORD tools and programs to conduct its site mitigation work. For example, DTSC utilizes guidance documents, training, and information on new technologies and approaches for environmental remediation available through the Contaminated Site Clean-Up Information website.[31] Discontinuation of ORD's work in this area would impair DTSC's ability to conduct scientifically defensible human and ecological risk and exposure assessments and other remedial activities at cleanup sites. In addition, the tools, models, and databases developed by ORD's Center for Computational Toxicology and Exposure make it possible for DTSC to evaluate human and ecological receptor toxicity data using cutting-edge science and a read-across framework to predict the environmental fate of chemicals. Staying current with scientific literature and progress is essential and ORD's ecological-risk resources are a vital resource for states.

DTSC's Safer Consumer Products Program also relies on ORD to carry out its mission to advance the design, development, and use of products that are chemically safer for people and the environment. For example, ORD's CompTox dashboard,[32] which contains information for over one million chemicals, allows DTSC to quickly and efficiently screen large groups of chemicals for hazard and exposure data. If this invaluable resource is lost or no longer updated, that would significantly impair DTSC's ability to screen candidate chemicals to identify product-chemical combinations for potential regulation.

In New York, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation relies on ORD's research related to water and wastewater infrastructure, biosolids management impacts, PFAS/PFOA and other emerging contaminants, and the development of scientific methods to test solid waste and biosolids matrices. The department does not have the resources to replace these critical programs and services.

North Carolina relies upon ORD's development of analytical methods for measuring contaminants in various environmental media. ORD has partnered with North Carolina's laboratory on multiple occasions on development and implementation of information management systems, training, sampling, and testing. ORD's development of analytical testing methods for PFAS have been key in the State's investigation and remediation of PFAS contamination. For instance, ORD's Emission Measurement Center staff have provided technical documentation, field and laboratory validation, peer-reviewed articles, and quality control procedures for stack testing methods for certain PFAS from stationary sources. Additionally, ORD laboratories have provided support with non-targeted analysis to help identify and monitor compounds of emerging concern that are difficult to measure with traditional methods. North Carolina greatly values this partnership, which furthers its goal of making regulatory decisions based on sound science and robust data.

[31] *See Contaminated Site Clean-Up Information*, https://www.clu-in.org/.
[32] EPA, *CompTox Chemicals Dashboard*, https://www.epa.gov/comptox-tools/comptox-chemicals-dashboard.

Washington similarly relies on ORD resources to understand and address statewide contamination from PFAS. Testing conducted by ORD's National Exposure Research Laboratory (NERL) in 2008 provided the first indication of PFAS contamination in Washington's environment.[33] ORD's early and continued development of analytical and risk assessment methods for PFAS has been critical to Washington's efforts to address the human health and environmental harms caused by PFAS contamination throughout the state.

As another example, Washington has relied on ORD's research to better understand the effects of exposure to N-(1,3-dimethylbutyl)-N′-phenyl-p-phenylenediamine (6PPD), a chemical found in artificial turf and tires that harms human health and causes salmon to die before they can spawn. ORD played an important role in the multi-agency Federal Research Action Plan on Recycled Tire Crumb Used on Playing Fields and Playground in identifying toxic chemicals present in recycled tires and assessing people's exposures to them. Washington's Department of Ecology incorporated ORD resources in its decision to identify 6PPD as a priority chemical that could be regulated under Washington's Safer Products program. In making this determination, Ecology considered including other members of the PPD chemical class but found that data available from ORD did not support grouping the class. ORD's resources helped Ecology avoid unintentionally restricting potentially safer chemicals.

For Massachusetts, ORD has been an important collaborator helping the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) evaluate the effectiveness of DER's cranberry bog restoration work to improve water quality on Cape Cod and across Southeastern Massachusetts. DER is currently restoring former cranberry farmland to natural wetlands, with over 15 projects in the planning stage, and more anticipated soon. EPA researchers have partnered with DER and others to quantify how restoring cranberry bogs to natural wetlands can help address Cape Cod's nutrient pollution issues. EPA's ORD supports the project with workshops, monitoring infrastructure, and through an EPA-funded watershed pilot project. DER will apply the results of this EPA research to evaluate DER's restoration techniques and outcomes throughout Southeastern Massachusetts.

* * *

The dismantling of the ORD and any efforts to reduce the ability of IRIS to conduct assessments or the EPA to rely on these assessments would be devastating for both the country as a whole, and states that rely on these resources. IRIS assessments are completed with a thorough process that can take more than three years to complete.[34] Most states do not have the resources to complete these assessments. Abdication of this responsibility by the federal government will increase inconsistency and regulatory uncertainty among different states. Additionally, both IRIS and the broader ORD provide scientific evaluation that is protected from bias, as their scientists have no financial interest in the outcome of their analyses and the work of both are subject to independent external scientific expert peer review.

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[33] *See* Washington Department of Ecology, *Perfluorinated Compounds in Washington Rivers and Lakes*, August 2010, https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/1003034.pdf.

[34] EPA, *IRIS Process Flow Chart*, https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-03/documents/iris_process_flow_chart.pdf.

By prohibiting the EPA from relying on IRIS assessments in their work, H.R. 1415 and S. 623 would blind the agency to the best available science, impede the protection of Americans, and directly contradict the stated mission of the EPA. Similarly, dismantling ORD would eliminate the EPA's ability to conduct the scientific research that supports the work of states and the Agency itself in protecting Americans from multiple threats to their health and quality of life. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Senate and the House to vote against prohibiting reliance on IRIS data, and to oppose any efforts to reduce and undermine ORD. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

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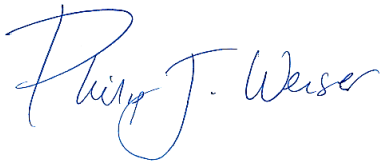

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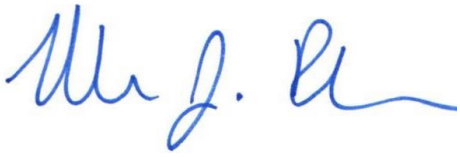

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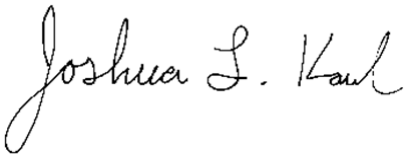

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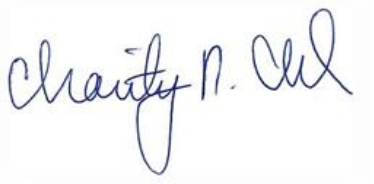

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The Honorable Sen. Jon Husted
The Honorable Sen. Andy Kim
The Honorable Sen. Amy Klobuchar

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