

12/1/2020

DNREC Hearing Committee @ DNRECHEARINGCOMMENTS@DELAWARE.GOV:

Thank you for extending public comment for the port expansion in Wilmington. The extra time allowed me to read documents regarding port expansion and speak with community members so I could come to a deeper understanding of this issue. Port expansion will provide many necessary, well paying, unionized jobs for members of our community and it simultaneously raises concerns about health & environmental issues.

I grew up in the 1980s on 21<sup>st</sup> and Jefferson and my mother worked night shift at GM for 20+ years. As such, I personally understand the lifeline that union wage work provides to members of our community. In Wilmington, we desperately need access to good jobs and a quality level educational system, both of which we lack. We know exactly what happens when entire groups are denied access to mobility enhancing opportunities & resources. Our current landscape of normalized structural violence including the absence of livable wage work, lack of affordable housing, sub-par wages, an under-funded educational system and excessive policing result in hopelessness, despair, and desperation.

I simultaneously understand the health concerns raised in the port expansion dialogue. Environmental pollution is a real and immediate issue. Delaware's rivers have been "dirty" for over a century and local health data underscores high rates of cancer, asthma, and other respiratory ailments directly stemming from local industries dumping toxins such as PCBs and other "legacy" pollutants such as mercury, DDT, and dioxins into the Christina river. We can't even eat the fish we catch because we have a statewide "fish consumption advisory." We know our river needs to be cleaned responsibly and doing so in a safe manner should be prioritized because community health is directly linked to polluted waterways.

The environment, disease proliferation, poverty, jobs, and health and wellness outcomes are intertwined, they do not exist in a vacuum nor are they irrespective of one another. As such, I think the question before us is not whether or not the port should be expanded to build a container port – it should be because our community needs well paying, unionized jobs – but how do we build a container port in a responsible manner so that we can provide much needed jobs, mitigate negative health outcomes, and protect the environment all at the same time? Port expansion can occur in a healthy & transparent manner, we must all commit to making this happen.

Thank you for reading my remarks.

Best regards,  
Adriana Leela Bohm  
Wilmington Resident