Verbal Comments on Permit Application Number 9600280.20A by June Blotnick, Executive Director of CleanAIRE NC

Good evening, I’m June Blotnick, the Executive Director of CleanAIRE NC. I’m here to comment on Flowers Timber's request to modify their existing air permit in order to comply with the Ambient Air Level (AAL) for Methyl Bromide and Phosphine.

I want to commend the Division of Air Quality for their hard work in creating the AAL for methyl bromide, a good first step in regulating this toxic chemical. That being said, we also strongly believe the health impacts of methyl bromide are so severe that it should not be used at all. We therefore oppose this permit request and urge DAQ to implement a strong monitoring and reporting program to protect the health of nearby communities.

As we noted during the development of the Methyl Bromide AAL, this chemical is a dangerous neurotoxin. Inhaling it at even low levels can cause headaches, weakness, sore throat, nausea, and neurological effects. High exposure can damage the eyes, skin, lungs, kidneys, and central nervous system.

These health impacts become even more apparent for the communities living on the fence line of Flowers Timber industrial activity who are exposed to methyl bromide 24 hours a day. As DAQ reports, these communities include a high population over the age of 75, a large latinx population with over 20% having Limited English Proficiency, and a large number of residents living in poverty. Thus, the problem of methyl bromide exposure is exacerbated due to economic insecurity, language barriers, and disproportionate long term health exposures.

We urge DAQ to implement a rigorous monitoring and reporting campaign to safeguard community health. The facility emits methyl bromide from stacks just 40 feet in height, far too short for the toxin to safely diffuse before reaching the surrounding residential areas. A robust network of monitors across the dispersion zone can provide an early warning of where and when methyl bromide concentrations reach dangerous levels. We also recommend that fenceline
communities are notified of their access to regular monitoring reports and that those reports are sent to the county health department.

We thank the Division for hosting this hearing but urge you to do everything in your power to protect public health when issuing air permits for facilities using methyl bromide.

References