

Good Afternoon. My name is Tegan Costanza. I support Governor Rendell's proposed mercury protections for our waterways that will cut the mercury pollution from our coal-fired power plants by ninety percent by the year 2015. I have lived in Collegeville, Pennsylvania along the Perkiomen Creek for all twenty years of my life. Unfortunately, I have never been able to take advantage of the many recreational activities the river has the potential to provide due to the low quality and cleanliness of the water. In particular, I have never been inclined to eat the fish that live in the Perkiomen Creek due to high levels of water pollution. One such pollutant that threatens many of our state's waterways is mercury. Mercury is deposited into our waterways from many sources, but is primarily emitted from our coal-fired power plants. This mercury then passes through the gills of the fish in these waterways, but can not be metabolized by the fish. Therefore, mercury builds up in the muscle and tissue of the fish. Consequently, those who consume the fish are forced to take in heightened levels of mercury.

Consuming high levels of mercury has been proven to be the cause of neurological defects in young children and developing fetuses. The risk of contracting such defects is so high that the government has had to release advisories requesting the limitation of the consumption of many fish that thrive in Pennsylvania's numerous waterways. While this effectively solves the problem of over-consumption of mercury, it is not a really a solution. This so-called solution is problematic in that limiting fish consumption also limits that consumption of other proteins and necessary nutrients that are essential to the development of the same population that it intends to protect.

The technology exists that would allow us to stop the problem at the source. Reducing mercury emissions from industrial facilities has been successful at reducing mercury levels in

waterways in other states, such as Massachusetts and Florida, and it is important that Pennsylvania follows suit and learns how to successfully protect its upcoming generations.

I understand that one of the main concerns in supporting Governor Rendell's mercury protection plan is economic. Fortunately, technology that would make these protections possible is less expensive than some of the methods that are currently used to control emissions from coal-fired power plants. Furthermore, a technology manager at the United States Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory stated that the installation of these technologies would not significantly increase utility costs.

If these technologies and protection are not instated, mercury levels in our waterways will continue increasing. These increased levels of mercury in our food supplies will continue to affect the development of young children in more and more extreme ways. With more children being born with developmental disorders, the state will be required to provide additional services for children within the public school system, potentially increasing taxes and other fines imposed on Pennsylvanians. Instating Governor Rendell's mercury protections and ensuring that mercury levels in our state's waterways are controlled and our children and future generations are protected is an inexpensive and important task. This administration has the opportunity to act upon this issue and show other states how easily and effectively these protections can be. Do not let this incredible opportunity slip away.

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