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House of Representatives
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CAUCUSES

COAL CAUCUS, CO-CHAIR
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January 6, 2021

PA Environmental Quality Board
The Honorable Patrick McDonell, Chairperson
P.O. Box 8477
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8477

RE: CO2 Budget Trading Program Public Comments

Dear Secretary McDonnell:

In October of 2019, Governor Wolf issued Executive Order 2019-7, directing the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to draft regulations to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative; a multi-state compact which seeks to place a cap on the total carbon emitted from electricity producers across eleven states in the northeast part of the country.

This market-based scheme establishes a regional cap on the amount of CO2 pollution that power plants can emit by issuing a limited number of tradable CO2 allowances. Each allowance represents an authorization for a regulated power plant to emit one short ton of CO2. Each state individually creates their own program which is in-turn approved by the 11 state conglomerate. Unlike Pennsylvania, every other state started this process with the approval of its legislature.

In the House of Representatives, I was proud to sponsor and pass bipartisan legislation to require legislative approval to join this program. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed our bill that passed both the House and Senate with a bipartisan majority. People that will be negatively impacted by this program deserve to have their voices heard through their state representation. But the Governor disagreed and blocked our constituents' voices.

Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania constitution clearly defines the people's right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Governor Wolf's plan does not accomplish this goal. Instead, joining RGGI will add substantial costs to Pennsylvania's electricity consumers and place burdensome financial restrictions on the state's energy industry which employs so many across the Commonwealth.

Joining RGGI will force good-paying, family-sustaining jobs across state lines into West Virginia and Ohio. This comes on the heels of an economic downturn at the hands of the COVID-19 response. It is imperative that Pennsylvania policymakers not enact laws or regulations that place our commonwealth at a competitive disadvantage to our competitor states. The truth is RGGI stands to hurt the areas of the commonwealth that have been left behind, Southwestern Pennsylvania, and beyond.

After listening to days of public input hearings and the numerous testifiers from Philadelphia and surrounding areas speak about the “polluters” I felt it necessary to comment. To suggest electricity producers and energy producers across Western Pennsylvania are willfully polluting their own air and water is hurtful. Our industries have made, and continue to make, great strides when it comes to environmental compliance and sustainability, all while continuing to fall under the some of the strictest regulations and standards in the nation.

Additionally, these hearings, being conducted virtually, made it essentially impossible for many living in my district of Washington, Fayette, and Greene County (home to the largest underground coal complex in the nation) to participate without the broadband internet connection.

The coal industry accounts for 25 percent of the employment in some regions of the state, and for every direct coal job an additional 1.97 jobs are supported in the state. Moreover, in my home county, coal supports upwards of 40 percent of the local tax base, and often serves as a community’s financial cornerstone for economic development.

According to the PA Department of Labor statistics, coal mining serves as the top industry in my home county of Greene, and two of Greene County’s top three employers are coal mines. Governor Wolf and the Department of Environmental Protection have yet to visit areas like mine that stand to be destroyed with their attempt to join RGGI. May this letter remind them that these coal workers who stand to lose their livelihood with this program are not just my constituents, but theirs too.

Governor Wolf wants to join the likes of New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. Pennsylvania doesn’t look anything like those states. Our economy is built differently. Our workforce is stronger, tougher and blue-collar, and we would like to keep it that way as we continue to work towards the future. Countless small businesses working in the energy industry will be decimated in a time when we cannot afford it. This proposal does nothing to benefit the people of Pennsylvania, and worse it directly and immediately hurts those in the 50th legislative district.

For all these reasons **I oppose the proposed regulation CO2 Budget Trading Program** published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on Nov 7th, 2020 (50. Pa.B. 6212) and ask you to reject the proposal and maintain our jobs and livelihoods in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide additional comments or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Snyder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pam Snyder
State Representative
50th Legislative District