



January 29, 2021



Independent Regulatory Review Commission

333 Market Street

Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Commissioners:

PO Box 202155

Harrisburg, PA 17120

[climatecaucus@pahouse.net](mailto:climatecaucus@pahouse.net)

#### Co-Chairs

Senator Steve Santarsiero

Rep. Danielle Friel Otten

#### Vice Chairs

Senator Carolyn Comitta

Rep. Nancy Guenst

#### Secretaries

Senator Amanda Cappelletti

Rep. Rick Krajewski

As members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Climate Caucus, we write to you to express our support for the proposed Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Regulation #7-559 (IRRC #3274).

On January 12th, 2021, the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, in a party-line vote, sent a letter to the IRCC regarding the disapproval of some members to Pennsylvania's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

We, the undersigned members of the General Assembly, believe that the Department of Environmental Protection is working within their authority to fulfill their mission to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water from pollution and to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment by entering into the RGGI Compact.

The positive impacts on job creation, public health, and environmental justice are many, as outlined by several of us and the citizens who have participated in public comments and testimony at one of the 10 virtual public hearings held on this proposed regulation. Under the Air Pollution Control Act of 1959, administrative authority is granted to provide for the better protection of the health, general welfare, and property of the people of the Commonwealth by the control, abatement, reduction and prevention of the pollution of the air. Authority is specifically granted to the Department of Environmental Protection, Environmental Quality Board and Environmental Hearing Board.

Further, Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution grants every Pennsylvanian a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment.



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It is clear that the Northeast and Midatlantic states are serious about reducing carbon emissions and halting global temperature increases. It is time for Pennsylvania to do its part. As one of the largest climate polluters in the nation, Pennsylvania joining RGGI would have a tremendous impact on regional, national, and global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which are exacerbating the impacts to agriculture, the cost of food, damage and loss of life and property due to extreme weather, the impact of pests and fires on our forests, disease transmitted by insects, acidification of our oceans, and depletion of groundwater and water sources used for clean drinking water and the exacerbating effect on cardiovascular and respiratory diseases that contribute to premature death. We must move away from a history of socializing the risk of the energy sector and privatizing the profits to corporations that perpetuates a legacy of a boom-and bust economy in Pennsylvania.

When people live in the shadows of energy production, who pays for the late night visits to the ER for the children suffering from asthma attacks due to poor air quality? Who pays for the cancer treatments for the folks living downwind of our coal-fired power plants? Who pays to clean up, redevelop, retrain and rebuild communities that have been left behind in the bust of the energy industry? We all pay in lost personal and municipal property values, increased healthcare costs, loss of opportunity, missed days of school and work, and the quality of our very lives. It is only fair that industry has limits and contributes, by way of a fee, to the cost of managing the externalities that they create for the communities where they operate and create an impact.

We all want our lights to turn on when we flip the switch. We want vibrant communities supported by good family sustaining jobs for our workforce. In the year, 2021, we do not need to pit a healthy economy and utilities that keep the lights on against the human and financial costs of climate change. Joining RGGI has significant economic upside. At a time when electricity prices across the board have risen by 8.5%, RGGI states have realized a 5.7% savings to electricity consumers. In the states already participating in RGGI, investments under the program have helped save consumers more than a billion dollars on their energy bills thus far. The average residential electricity bill in RGGI states will be 35% lower in 2031 than it was in 2017, lessening energy bill burdens on families and low income communities. Economic growth in RGGI states has outpaced the rest of the country by 31%. Participation in RGGI can result in a net increase of 27,000 jobs in Pennsylvania and add \$1.9 billion to the Gross State Product by 2030, putting Pennsylvania on a path to a cleaner and healthier economy. According to reports released by the Wolf administration in August 2020, the energy sector provided 269,031 jobs, or 4.5 percent of the overall statewide workforce, as of the last quarter of 2019. Significantly, the clean energy sector showed an average job growth rate of 8.7 percent, or nearly double that, adding 7,794 jobs in 2017-2019.

The Pennsylvania Legislative Climate Caucus convenes to research, evaluate, discuss, and raise awareness about legislation, appropriations and related matters in ways that affirm evidence-based, peer-reviewed science, the acceptance that climate change is



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real and human-made, the importance of environmental justice, and the necessity for a renewable energy future. Further, the Climate Caucus operates to uphold the charge of environmental stewardship as laid bare in Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution.

We write this letter to affirm our support and to assert that the evidence is clear. It's time for Pennsylvania to get with the program and provide our citizens with a healthier Commonwealth, environmentally and economically, by joining our neighboring states in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

Sincerely,

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