

26TH DISTRICT  
STATE SENATOR  
**TIM KEARNEY**

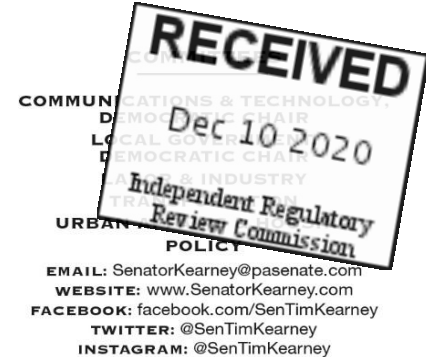
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## Senate of Pennsylvania



December 10, 2020

Environmental Quality Board  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor, 400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

RE: Proposed Rulemaking: CO2 Budget Trading Program (#7-559)

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to submit my comments during PA-DEP's public comment period in support of Pennsylvania joining RGGI, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Climate change is an extremely important issue for my constituents in the 26<sup>th</sup> Senate District, one that I constantly receive pleas to address from individual citizens to civic organizations, businesses, religious groups, and others. I was elected with a great sense of urgency to reduce Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas emissions, and with the General Assembly failing to take action to curb our climate impact, the proposed rule provides a significant step towards progress.

Across the country, we already see the impact of the climate crisis every day. Record floods, devastating wildfires, and extreme hurricanes are costing lives and billions of dollars in damage. As the fourth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the nation, Pennsylvania has a responsibility to be a leader in implementing climate solutions and reducing emissions.

Joining RGGI is a key step towards that goal. Over the past twelve years, RGGI has proven to be the most successful state-level program in the nation when it comes to addressing greenhouse gas emissions. From 2008 to 2018, carbon pollution has decreased by 47% in participating RGGI states, outpacing the rest of the country by 90%. If Pennsylvania joins RGGI, we are projected to reduce our carbon emissions by a massive 188 million tons by 2030 – equivalent to taking more than 36 million cars off the road.

Reducing emissions from dirty power plants has tremendous benefits to public health. Lower air pollution in RGGI states has led to significantly fewer premature deaths, heart attacks, and respiratory illnesses. Studies show that by joining RGGI, Pennsylvania could prevent hundreds of premature deaths from respiratory illnesses and avoid 30,000 hospital visits for respiratory

related illnesses. The COVID-19 pandemic only emphasizes the importance of RGGI, because the virus is much more lethal to people who have been more exposed to air pollutants and are at greater risk of respiratory illnesses. At a time when COVID-19 is infecting thousands of Pennsylvanians and taking the lives of hundreds daily, the Commonwealth is right to prioritize immediate and long-term measure to improve air quality.

RGGI is expected to offer Pennsylvania significant economic benefits. It is projected to create 27,000 new jobs in Pennsylvania and put nearly \$2 billion into the Commonwealth's economy over the next decade alone. Studies have also shown that the cost of implementing RGGI is negligible for rate payers and can even save consumers money with the right measures. In fact, electricity prices have fallen by 5.7% in RGGI states, while prices have increased in the rest of the country by 8.6%. If we were to not join RGGI, projections suggest that energy prices will rise in Pennsylvania. During these times of financial uncertainty for so many Pennsylvanians, my constituents would certainly benefit from these cost reductions, not increases.

The proceeds from RGGI will also be critical for providing economic justice to workers and communities who are being disrupted by natural market forces. Natural gas has already devastated the coal industry and the livelihoods of the people who depend on coal jobs, and RGGI provides a way forward for these communities.

Article 1 Section 27 of the PA 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." By reducing power plant emissions under RGGI, our Commonwealth will uphold that constitutional mandate.

Through this program, Pennsylvania can tackle the climate crisis head-on, inject much-needed money into our economy, and create thousands of good jobs. Above all else, we need to ensure a safe future for generations to come, and RGGI is the first step on that path for Pennsylvania.

I urge you to approve the plan for Pennsylvania to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Kearney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Kearney  
26<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District