



Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

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Good afternoon. My name is Danielle Friel Otten, and I represent the 155th Legislative District in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, where I also serve on the House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the importance of RGGI to families and communities in my Chester County district and across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

I support linking our state to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. RGGI gives us an opportunity to clean up our air, protect our citizens from the impacts of climate change, and move away from Pennsylvania's legacy as one of the biggest greenhouse gas producers in the country, toward a science-based solution to reduce carbon emissions.

While RGGI is not a standalone solution to the climate crisis, by incentivizing industry to reduce carbon pollution, RGGI represents an important and necessary first step toward 100% renewable energy. RGGI will help Pennsylvania promote alternative energy sources, create local, family-sustaining jobs, electrify our transportation systems, and meet greenhouse gas reduction goals established by the state in 2019. (That's a reduction of 26 percent by 2025 and 80 percent by 2050, as compared to 2005 levels). Without joining RGGI, Pennsylvania will not meet even the interim goal, posing a great risk to the Commonwealth.

Most importantly, participation in RGGI will help to improve overall public health and quality of life for many families across the state. The Pittsburgh metro area and the Philadelphia metro area rank #8 and #12, respectively, on the American Lung Association's "State of the Air 2020" list of worst cities for year-round particle pollution. DEP has estimated that between 2022 and 2030, RGGI could prevent up to 639 premature deaths and 30,000 hospital visits for respiratory illnesses in Pennsylvania. But even those numbers don't tell the whole story.

Too often, we get our energy independence on the backs of communities that take on dirty infrastructure, emissions, and pollution. These conditions can create life-long health risks -- including cancer, heart disease, and lung disease. According to

Physicians for Social Responsibility, individuals with exposure to high levels of air pollution are even at greater risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to protect vulnerable populations from harm and to give pollution hot-spot communities their best chance to thrive and enjoy a better, healthier quality of life. Children, the elderly, communities of color, individuals with underlying health conditions, and low-income communities overburdened by the health impacts of air pollution and climate change are depending on all of us to reduce the harm caused by carbon emissions.

I urge the EQB and DEP to move deliberately and quickly on the RGGI rule in the interest of real and meaningful climate action for our Commonwealth.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.