

19TH DISTRICT
STATE SENATOR
CAROLYN T. COMITTA

SENATE BOX 203019
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3019
717-787-5709

DISTRICT: 610-692-2112

EMAIL: senatorcomitta@pasenate.com
WEBSITE: www.pasenate.com



Senate of Pennsylvania



Senator-Elect Carolyn T. Comitta Testimony
senatorcomitta@pasenate.com
Room 457, Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation
DEP/EQB Public Hearing
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Good morning, my name is Carolyn Comitta and I am the State Senator-Elect for Pennsylvania's 19th district. I want to thank the Environmental Quality Board for holding this hearing. I am speaking today in strong support of the draft rule on the CO2 budget trading program.

By moving forward with the draft rule to link Pennsylvania with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), we are recognizing the urgency of the climate crisis and taking action to protect our climate, boost our economy, and safeguard the health of Pennsylvanians for generations to come.

Setting a limit on power sector carbon pollution will allow us to take responsibility for its contribution to global climate change and establish the Commonwealth as a leader in the clean energy economy. As a major fossil-fuel producing state with the fourth dirtiest power sector in the nation, Pennsylvania has the responsibility to strive for ambitious and impactful carbon pollution reductions. One DEP analysis shows that linking with RGGI would ensure a 188-million-ton carbon reduction over the life of the program. Another analysis shows a simultaneous increase in our role as an energy exporter by as much as 65% from 2018 levels.

Linking with RGGI has immense economic advantages. A flexible, market-based program maximizes cost-effective pollution reductions without picking technological winners or losers, an approach well-suited to Pennsylvania's diverse energy portfolio. In addition, DEP projects a net increase of 27,000 jobs in Pennsylvania from RGGI. Meanwhile, the

average residential electric bill could see a 35% decrease by 2031. These are real jobs and real savings for real people across the Commonwealth.

Beyond these economic benefits, these emissions reductions have incredible implications for environmental and public health. Cleaning up a dirty power sector means not only reducing dangerous climate pollution, but also cutting soot, smog, and other harmful pollution that compromises the air we breathe every day. A study from the Columbia University School of Public Health on the health benefits to children estimated that linking with RGGI avoided 112 preterm births, 537 asthma cases, and 56 cases of term low birth weight in the participating states. (<https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP6706>) These incredible benefits are from a single pollutant over a 5-year period – imagine what this program could do for our children’s health for decades to come.

Here in Pennsylvania, polling consistently shows that more than 70% of our constituents strongly support action on climate change, and this draft rule has diverse support from businesses and institutions to environmental and health groups. It provides Pennsylvania with a critical opportunity to tackle climate change while securing immense health and economic benefits for its residents. This is an opportunity for us to live up to our Constitutional duty to protect the people's right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of the natural environment. This is an opportunity we cannot pass by.

If we fully appreciate the urgency of the climate crisis and the importance of preserving and protecting our environment for future generations, we must act. Now, is the time for Pennsylvania to stand as a leader. Thank you for the chance to testify today and for all you are doing to support PA's path toward a clean energy future, a safe and healthy future for our children

