



Environmental Quality Board – Testimony for CO₂ Budget Trading Program Rule

50 Pa.B. 6212

Dear Secretary McDonnell and The Environmental Quality Board,

Thank you for allowing me to share my comments today. I am Reverend Joseph W. Hedden, Jr, a Christian and my comments are offered as a private citizen and a resident of Murrysville Pennsylvania.

As member of the United Church of Christ, a one million member denomination in the United States, my faith directs my actions and we have an initiative in the United Church of Christ: “Three Great Loves, seeking a just world for all.” That is, we believe as the United Church of Christ that we are called to express and live out three great loves in our faith: Love of Children, Love of Neighbor, and Love of Creation. God loves children. God loves the neighbor. God loves Creation. And so do we.

I support the Department of Environment Protection’s proposed standard to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and cut carbon pollution (and other pollutants) from electric power generation. I believe that the RGGI fulfills the values of the three great loves.

As a father of two children who have struggled with asthma and asthma-related conditions, I am well aware that fossil fuel production for industry and electricity can create uncomfortable and even dangerous health conditions for children and adults. Even worse is the harrowing statistic that Pennsylvania has the third most air pollution related deaths in the United States, 2300 in 2018, behind only California and New York.

By joining RGGI, we can reduce these negative impacts on our children, our neighbors, and this beautiful Creation. The Pittsburgh region, where I live and work, is consistently one of the worst regions for year-round air quality, being one of the bottom 10 regions in the United States. Climate change, with its increased temperatures, will also make health problems worse: the American Lung Association reports that climate change and consequent temperature rise makes the conditions for creation of smog or ozone greater.

On the positive side, we are living through a technological transition. Pennsylvania can lead and innovate away from the highly subsidized fossil fuel industry and toward an innovative 21st Century energy market and new technologically cutting edge industry. The new jobs in Southwestern Pennsylvania that will grow are 21st Century jobs in energy efficiency, innovation, renewable sources of electricity, solar, and wind. Business and industry leaders support market-based solutions such as carbon limits proposed by RGGI.

The Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) own analysis confirms that joining the RGGI will lead to a net increase of more than 27,000 jobs and add \$1.9 billion to the state’s economy. This program has been a success in the 10 states where it has been

implemented, cutting climate pollution by a third and raising nearly \$3 billion to invest in clean energy and other purposes.

As a resident of Murrysville, where the first commercial gas well in the US was discovered in 1878, I understand that coal, natural gas, and oil built our communities in Southwest Pennsylvania. I understand the fear of losing livelihoods. However, as a Christian who believes that I am called to live out my values, and a believer in the market economy, I believe it is time to allow both the market as well as our children's health to flourish. I see the RGGI as a way to invest in these communities and to not be left behind by other states in the Northeast.

I believe the RGGI will provide a revenue stream to help coal, natural gas, and oil communities transition to other skilled careers that will provide for families. RGGI will also defend our children's health.

RGGI proceeds should be used to fund a just transition for fossil fuel workers and communities who are owed a debt of gratitude for their years of service and endured exacerbated health risks.

RGGI as a carbon pollution control program can reduce harmful climate-changing CO2 emissions, valuing my children's health as well as your children and grandchildren's health, and, making a commitment to investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy, which will position Pennsylvania as a leader in the growing clean energy economy.

Thank you for listening to my remarks.

Rev. Joseph Hedden Jr.

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