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Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation” along with:

Good morning. My name is Juliet Birch, I am a resident of Media, Pennsylvania and I am testifying today as a private resident. I go to school in Baltimore, Maryland and I will be graduating from Goucher College this coming May with a bachelor's degree in Political Science. By this time next year, I will be pursuing a Master of Public Policy with a concentration in Environmental Policy from an institution in the greater Philadelphia area.

Growing up in Media, PA, I suffered from a lot of health problems. When I was just two years old, I was hospitalized for debilitating inflammation of the lungs caused by asthma. To this day, I can feel my lungs tighten when it starts to get chilly out, and this condition greatly affects my ability to breathe freely on days with particularly poor air quality. I have personally struggled to get enough oxygen due to air pollution and I am not alone in this experience. The prevalence of childhood asthma in Pennsylvania is 0.6% higher than the national average, and this is on the rise.

This is why I believe the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is so important. RGGI is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. Pennsylvania cities have some of the worst air pollution in the country, and increasing temperatures from climate change actually exacerbate air pollution. A 2016 report from the American Lung Association found that the Pittsburgh metro region has the 8th highest levels of year-round particle pollution in the country. The Harrisburg area ranked 9th and Philadelphia was 12th. That is an embarrassment and we cannot afford to allow this issue to get any worse.

By joining RGGI, we will significantly improve our air quality by reducing pollution from sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and particulate matter. These pollutants are linked to health problems including respiratory illness, heart attack, stroke, cancer and mental health problems. Air pollution reductions from RGGI will particularly benefit those most impacted by poor air quality, such as children, seniors, and low income communities.

In Pennsylvania, our constitution guarantees the right for all residents to clean water to drink and clean air to breathe. Thus far, I feel that I have not been fully afforded that right. The constitution alone has not protected me from the air pollution that has complicated my breathing. Joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative would help Pennsylvania to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and bring us one step closer to ensuring clean air. It would give me the opportunity to step outside and take a deep breath of fresh air. For all of these reasons and more, I support entering Pennsylvania into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Resources:

<https://breatheproject.org/asthma-on-the-rise/>

<https://why.org/articles/pennsylvania-cities-have-some-of-the-worst-air-pollution-in-the-country/>

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/climate/Pages/RGGI.aspx>