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Nuclear Matters

Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program

Pennsylvania and its clean energy future are at a critical juncture. By joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Pennsylvania's leaders are seizing the opportunity to build a more resilient and sustainable economy while taking a significant step towards achieving the state's ambitious carbon reduction goals.

There is no doubt that Pennsylvania needs smart, economically viable solutions to protect its environment, air quality, and public health. Experts say we have just over a decade to stop irreversible damage from climate change, and the *most efficient* way to tackle these issues is by increasing our generation of carbon-free energy—which means sources like nuclear power must continue to be a key component of the state's clean energy solutions.

I represent Nuclear Matters, a national coalition of more than 600,000 advocates that works to inform the public and policymakers about the clear benefits of nuclear energy. Our coalition supports proven clean energy solutions like RGGI which properly value nuclear power as a reliable, affordable, safe and carbon-free electricity resource that is essential to America's energy future.

We applaud Pennsylvania and state leaders like Gov. Tom Wolf for taking steps to enter the Commonwealth into RGGI, and we encourage them to continue doing everything in their power to fight climate change and support carbon-free nuclear energy alongside other clean energy technologies and solutions. By pledging to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, Pennsylvania is asserting itself as a leader in clean power generation, bolstered by its commitment to nuclear power and a growing share of renewable energy sources.

By joining RGGI, Pennsylvania leaders are also taking a big step towards protecting the state's four remaining nuclear power plants – Beaver Valley, Limerick, Peach Bottom and Susquehanna – which provide 92 percent of the state's clean electricity generation, saving our atmosphere from more than 51 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year. Currently, nuclear energy is one of Pennsylvania's primary tools for reducing carbon emissions, and RGGI, along with other necessary actions, will ensure the nation's largest source of carbon free energy is here to stay in the Commonwealth.

As you know, RGGI uses flexible, market-based approaches to cutting power plant pollution through a "cap and invest" program. Because of its well-documented success, the initiative has become a model for states like Pennsylvania that want to transition to cleaner energy while reaping billions of dollars in economic, health and social benefits.

Since its launch, RGGI states have cut their carbon pollution from power plants by more than half, putting the region at the forefront of the battle against climate change. Pennsylvania's participation in RGGI is projected to reduce its emissions by a massive 188 million tons by 2030.

The prevalence of myriad dangerous pollutants, such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides – which are linked to human health impacts, including developmental delays, heart attacks, respiratory diseases and even cancer – will also drop significantly. In total, these emission reductions will produce up to \$525 million in health benefits per year – a remarkable advancement for the well-being of Pennsylvanians.

Joining RGGI wouldn't just benefit Pennsylvania's environment and public health – it would also boost the state's economy. Since implementation, RGGI states have saved consumers hundreds of millions of dollars on energy and created thousands of family-sustaining clean energy jobs. Pennsylvania is well-positioned to replicate these results. In fact, the DEP's model estimates participating in RGGI would lead to a net increase of over 27,000 jobs in Pennsylvania and an increase of nearly \$2 billion in Gross State Product. This would be in addition to the 15,000 family-sustaining jobs that Pennsylvania's four nuclear power plants support.

Clearly, the clean power sector is an invaluable engine of sustainable job creation, capable of putting thousands of Pennsylvanians to work while ensuring a healthier environment for all. As our country seeks to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, we must enact policies that will put Pennsylvanians to work and protect against future public health disasters. RGGI has a proven track record of lowering carbon dioxide emissions and boosting economies, and its implementation will help ensure that we're not caught flat-footed again.

By joining RGGI, Pennsylvania will help lead our country's charge against climate change and ensure Pennsylvanians can enjoy the benefits of nuclear carbon-free energy and renewables for decades to come. On behalf of Nuclear Matters' 600,000 advocates, I strongly support and applaud the Environmental Quality Board's proposal to confirm Pennsylvania's participation in RGGI. Pennsylvania's clean energy future looks bright because of this commitment, and we look forward to the swift enactment of the RGGI program.