



RGGI Testimony

My name is E. Meryl M-E-R-Y-L Sands S-A-N-D-S and I am a resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this virtual public hearing.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats we face. Here in Pennsylvania we are already experiencing the effects.

Stronger storms and more flooding are straining our infrastructure and our budgets. For example, PennDOT spent more than \$125 million in 2018 alone to repair flooding and landslide damage. Power outages hit a record high in 2019, disrupting electricity for nearly 2 million customers. This year was no different, with at least \$20 billion in weather damage nationwide.

Temperatures in Pennsylvania are projected to increase by 5.4 degrees by 2050 and the number of days with a heat index above 90 degrees will increase dramatically from eight to 40 per year. This will have an enormous impact on our farmers, especially dairy farmers.

High temperatures also have an undue health effect on those in cities, especially those without access to green space or air conditioning. Speaking from personal experience, I worked outdoors in Philadelphia for 4 summers, from 2014-2019. I quickly learned the difference between working in a greenspace, (whether it be a park, or just a sidewalk with tree) and a parking lot, or brown space. I learned the importance of sunscreen, hydration, and hats. But despite these efforts, by 2018, I knew that continuing to work outdoors was unsustainable for me due to the risks and effects of heat exhaustion, which I experienced multiple times. These risks increase with the intensity of the type of labor, the ability to take breaks from the heat, and certain medications that increase sensitivity to the sun. In Philadelphia, many neighborhoods lack tree cover, and as a result, have temperatures that are 22 degrees higher. These neighborhoods are more likely to be neighborhoods of color, with higher asthma rates. Montelukast sodium is a common asthma medication, which, you guessed it, has increased sun sensitivity as a side effect.

Climate change is also contributing to increases in Lyme disease and West Nile Virus and other tick and mosquito borne illnesses. Heat related deaths are on the rise, along with an increase in respiratory ailments like asthma. These both disproportionately affect our children and our elderly.

Unfortunately, Pennsylvania is contributing to climate change because it is the third-largest producer of carbon pollution in the country.

It's time for Pennsylvania to get on board with a proven program to reduce carbon pollution and create thousands of jobs and join the bipartisan Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI.

RGGI has been an enormous success in the states where it is in place, cutting climate pollution by a third and raising nearly \$3 billion to invest in clean energy and other purposes.

Pennsylvania could receive hundreds of millions of dollars in proceeds as well. These funds would be invested in targeted efforts to eliminate air pollution, spur job creation, support working Pennsylvanians, and help boost the state's long-term economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expert analysis conducted for DEP confirmed that RGGI would produce a net increase of 27,000 jobs and add \$1.9 Billion to our state's economy.

Participation in RGGI will also make our citizens healthier. DEP analysis concluded that overall carbon emissions will be cut by more than 180 million tons from 2022 – 2030. Harmful sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions will be cut as well. That will produce \$6.3 billion in health care savings and 30,000 fewer hospital visits for respiratory illnesses like asthma among children and adults. There will also be 45,000 fewer asthma attacks and a 1,000 fewer cases of childhood bronchitis.

Pennsylvanians want their lawmakers to address climate change. Polling shows that three in four Pennsylvanians support reducing carbon pollution from power plants and want their electricity to come from clean energy sources that do not create carbon pollution. Businesses large and small are on board as well and support RGGI's market-based approach.

Thank you for considering my testimony. In summary, RGGI is the market based, job creating, PROVEN tool for Pennsylvania to tackle the problems that climate change presents.