



Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

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Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight in favor of DEP's proposed RGGI rule.

My name is Kristen Nichols, and I live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I have a bachelors of arts in environmental studies and a minor in economics from the University of Pittsburgh, and I am currently pursuing a juris doctorate at Temple University Beasley School of Law. I have worked at various national and international environmental organizations, including the Group Against Smog and Pollution in Pittsburgh, British Water in London, and the Region 3 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support joining RGGI. Seventy-nine percent of Pennsylvanians support placing a limit on carbon pollution from power plants and more than seven in ten Pennsylvania voters support the state's participation in RGGI. I agree.

The most important thing that I want to emphasize to the Board tonight is that joining RGGI and transitioning our power plants to cleaner energy sources is not a sacrifice, but a massive opportunity. Pennsylvania's economy is undergoing a fundamental transition away from unsustainable energy sources, to a clean energy economy that works for everyone, including future generations of Pennsylvanians yet to come.

I was born and raised in Philadelphia. Both sides of my family have lived in Philadelphia since they immigrated to America. I went to the University of Pittsburgh for my undergraduate education to study the intersection of environmental policy and economics. I understand the common values and concerns of Pennsylvanians. I understand the air of hesitancy some Pennsylvania citizens express when faced with the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. But the root of their hesitation is a longing for economic security and stability, which is exactly what RGGI can offer the Commonwealth's citizens. The fastest growing job in America today is wind turbine technicians. The third fastest growing job is solar installer. Today in Pennsylvania, at 90,000 and counting, clean energy jobs already outnumber fossil fuel jobs. And DEP's own analysis shows RGGI will add another 27,000 clean energy jobs to that figure and inject nearly \$2 billion dollars into the state's economy.

RGGI has been a big success in the 10 states where it's already in place, cutting climate

pollution by a third and raising nearly \$3 billion dollars to invest in energy efficiency and clean energy projects. Carbon emissions from power plants in RGGI states have fallen by forty-seven percent, outpacing the rest of the country by ninety percent.

Not only is RGGI good for Pennsylvania, it is arguably DEP's duty to implement RGGI under § 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution.¹ Under the Environmental Rights Amendment, all levels of Pennsylvania government have a duty to conserve and maintain the People's right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of the natural, scenic, and historic values of the environment, which are the common property of all Pennsylvanians, including generations yet to come. This means DEP has a constitutional duty to reduce the carbon emissions that are unleashing global climate chaos. Additionally, it will soon also be required by federal regulation. Once President-elect Biden takes the oath of office on January 20th, one of the top items on his to-do list will be directing his new EPA administrator to exercise their authority under the federal Clean Air Act to require states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. RGGI will be a key to Pennsylvania's ability to comply with that federal duty.

I strongly support joining RGGI, along with the majority of Pennsylvanians, and I urge DEP to pass the necessary regulations to implement RGGI in our Commonwealth. I support setting a stringent cap and aggressive reduction targets that will ensure Pennsylvania becomes a leader among other Northeast states in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. RGGI is a giant step in the right direction in preparing Pennsylvania for a changing climate, and transitioning our economy to a cleaner energy future.

Thank you.

¹ *Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Foundation. v. Commonwealth.*, 161 A.3d 911, 931, n. 23, 932 (Pa. 2017).