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Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

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Concerned citizen

My name is Amy Scanlon and I live in the Perry North area of Pittsburgh.

While “Landslide” is a beautiful song by the world’s greatest band (Fleetwood Mac), it is not a thing of beauty in real life. Over the past few years, my neighborhood has been hit hard with landslides, a result of record-breaking rainfall. Weather extremes like this are becoming more common, as a result of climate change.

2018 was particularly bad. Homes in my neighborhood were among the 131 properties damaged by landslides in Allegheny County that year. When I walk in Riverview Park, I can still see houses in various stages of collapse or danger at the edge of the park. This frightens me, because my own home is one of many in Pittsburgh built into a hill.

In addition to houses collapsing, a section of Route 30 collapsed that year. It’s a major road I regularly travel. A landslide sent 300 feet of roadway and thousands of tons of soil plummeting onto an apartment building and other buildings below.

These slides are obviously dangerous and they’re costly. The City of Pittsburgh had to triple its landslide budget, to \$7 million. Early last year, PennDOT reported monitoring more than 300 landslides in just 7 southwestern Pennsylvania counties. The agency stated that they doubled their landslide budget, but even then, could not repair all slides. Repairing the collapsed section of Route 30 alone cost \$6.9 million dollars.

If a landslide were to occur on my property, we hope we’d be lucky enough to escape harm. But even if we emerge physically unscathed, we would be devastated financially. Like many Americans, our major asset is our home, and landslides are not covered by homeowners insurance. Not to mention the countless irreplaceable possessions like wedding photos, and family heirlooms that would also be lost. I’ve spent sleepless nights wondering if we shouldn’t sell our home and move somewhere safer.

But where would that be? “Safer” is getting increasingly harder to find. In my neighborhood we have landslides; in others, there’s flooding. In still others, we’d be closer to the factories spewing clouds of pollution. As a person with adult-onset asthma, that is not an option for me.

But there is a solution today. Pennsylvania has the opportunity to collaborate with other Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states by joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or “Reggie.” RGGI is a win-win, to reduce emissions and improve our climate while also generating jobs and cost savings. The initiative is projected to create 27,000 new jobs in Pennsylvania and put nearly two billion dollars into the state’s economy over the next decade alone.

Like Stevie Nicks sings, we’ve been “afraid of changing” for too long. It’s time to change our approach to environmental protection. Pennsylvania should make the common-sense choice for today, and for our future, to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

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