



Thank you Secretary McDonnell and Board for the opportunity to share today.

My name is Austin Orth. The thoughts I share today are my own and come from my perspective as both a Christian and a private citizen residing in the North Hills of Pittsburgh.

Though I now live in Pittsburgh, I am originally from Meyersdale, PA in Somerset County, and attended Waynesburg University in Waynesburg, PA, in Greene County. One thing these counties have in common is coal mining, and both growing up and as a college student, I experienced the tension in the communities I was a part of between the jobs and the health issues--heavy metals in the water, pollution in the air--that coal brought to these communities.

Now in Pittsburgh, I realize how dangerous pollution is in our cities. I have experienced firsthand the thick, fume-filled air in Oakland, when temperature inversions pull pollution down into the streets, and many days in the Strip District when my coworker who has asthma is unable to be outside for more

than five minutes and not start wheezing. In addition, Pittsburgh's history of red-lining has placed my Black friends and their communities in the most polluted neighborhoods, making their experience even worse.

In light of these experiences, and compelled by the words of Christ to love my neighbor as myself, I wholeheartedly support the Department of Environmental Protection's proposed standard to Join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and cut carbon and other pollutants from electric power generation. The people of my hometown, my city, and my state, and future generations, will all have healthier lives if we join it.

I must also address the needs of my coal mining neighbors. It hurts to know that jobs will be lost. But the economy is changing, and whether we join RGGI or not, coal jobs are disappearing. That is why I am calling for at least 50% of all RGGI proceeds to go directly to job creation and transition assistance for coal miners to not be left behind.

A portion of the proceeds should also go to serving people living in the most-polluted areas of our state, particularly Black communities that have been red-lined.

In your deliberation, I humbly ask that “each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” as Paul and Timothy say in Scripture. Thank you for your time.