



Testimony in support of Pennsylvania joining RGGI - 12/14/20

Eileen Kraus-Dobratz
5464 Upsal Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
eileen.kraus@gmail.com

Good afternoon. My name is Eileen Kraus-Dobratz. I live in Pittsburgh. And I am speaking as a private citizen. I'd like to share two personal stories that reflect on this important issue.

My first experience illustrates our need for improved air quality to keep the Pittsburgh region growing. I work in an office with many young professionals. One grew up here and had childhood asthma, which disappeared when he left the region. When he returned to Pittsburgh, so did his asthma. Now he is starting a family and is very concerned that putting down roots here will cause his children to get asthma too. Pittsburgh needs to attract young workers. We need to replace the many thousands of workers lost when the steel mills closed. How can we attract new workers to the region, if they have these serious health concerns for themselves and their children? And why will growing companies who need young workers invest and open offices here, if they cannot attract the workers they want?

This was confirmed by an op-ed from one young Pittsburgh Google employee in January 2020, noting that air quality had been a factor in the decision of several co-workers to leave the city, and advising other Google employees to stay away because of the air pollution. That should be a warning and an object lesson in the economic importance of healthy air to the region.

My second personal experience relates to the urgency of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The very safety of our homes, neighborhoods, and roads has been impacted by landslides, occurring after particularly heavy rains, which are more common with climate change. In my neighborhood in the East End of Pittsburgh there were serious landslides in 2018. Two houses were taken out, right in the middle of our city, less than a mile from Google. Not in an outskirt, or a sparsely populated area, but in the middle of the city. I walked by last week and saw again the two empty lots. The hillside is still not repaired. And the parking lot at the bottom of that landslide, that serves a large Penn Avenue commercial/residential building, still has piles of debris that reduce parking space. And there have been several lengthy road closures with expensive repairs due to landslides in 2019. So RGGI will not just improve our health, economic growth and our regional prosperity, it will also improve the long-term safety of our homes and other infrastructure by reducing carbon pollution.

So we have a problem. Is RGGI a good way to address it? RGGI is one of the very best ways to approach this problem because it allows market forces to operate. It provides incentives to power companies to invest in greater efficiency and in clean-energy technologies. It allows for a gradual move toward cleaner energy based on what businesses do best: a cost-benefit analysis. And RGGI is proven effective: RGGI states have reduced carbon emissions by 45% since 2005.

PA emits ~1% of global carbon pollution (that's more than many countries!). The electricity sector is the 2nd highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in PA. With RGGI PA can greatly cut emissions of both climate pollution and air toxics. Your wise decision is critical on this issue. For my grandchildren, I urge you to move forward to enable PA to join RGGI without major modifications. Thank you.