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Private Citizen

Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of this deeply important issue of Pennsylvania joining RGGI. I'm a senior at Temple University, and I've lived in Pennsylvania for the past 15 years --- most of my life. As a Geography student, the environment is incredibly important to me. I'm excited that we have the chance to take meaningful action on climate change in Pennsylvania through RGGI, and here's why:

My father is a Greater Pittsburgh native, having grown up in Latrobe. Most summers, he would go on a family vacation to Conneaut Lake. About an hour and a half drive North of Pittsburgh, Conneaut Lake is the largest natural lake in Pennsylvania. He took my mother, my brother, and myself on vacation there about 6 years ago, and he was shocked about how much it has changed. The banks were more dry, the beach had some litter. Is some of this due to natural aging? Of course. Still, I can't help but wonder if there are other reasons that the lake that my dad remembered is no longer so. Climate change is already affecting our local environment -- causing droughts in some areas, floods in others, and will continue to wreak havoc on our natural world if we don't do something now.

Rural Pennsylvania is not the only place hurting from pollution, either. As I mentioned, I grew up in PA, in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, and Allegheny County has some of the worst air quality in the entire nation; we're in the worst 2% of counties at risk for cancer from air pollution, which means there are people here developing cancer just from breathing the air! How can that be, in what was recently named the most liveable city in the US?

Joining RGGI is the next major step we can take to reduce carbon pollution and the toxic emissions that are also emitted by power plants. RGGI will particularly benefit those most impacted by poor air quality, such as children, seniors, and other vulnerable populations - the groups of people who are most at risk for breathing in PA's dirty air daily. Joining RGGI is a necessary step if we're going to have a stable climate in the future and protect more places like Conneaut Lake from being impacted by climate change.

Ensuring all Pennsylvanians have clean air to breathe and protecting the health and well-being of our residents should be top priority, always. Our Pennsylvania Constitution guarantees that all residents in PA have the right to clean drinking water and clean air to breathe; it is time to uphold that legal responsibility and join RGGI. Thank you for your time.