



Testimony of Diana Ames
Pittsburgh, PA
Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative
12/10/2020
diana.ames@verizon.net

Thank you for this opportunity to comment in favor of Pennsylvania's plan to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and thank you to Governor Wolf, the EQB and the DEP for pressing forward on this critically important effort.

The extreme weather events of the past year alone has given us a terrifying preview of the devastating impacts of climate disruption caused by greenhouse gas emissions. Increases in the frequency and severity of tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts and wildfires urgently summon us to action.

A poll conducted in September by Climate Nexus, Yale University, and George Mason University revealed that 76% of Pennsylvanians consider climate change to be a serious problem – a result similar to other recent polls. Yet Pennsylvania's dependence upon fossil fuels leaves us with the lamentable distinction of being fourth in the nation in carbon emissions. It's clearly time for action, and RGGI offers a well-established path for initial steps.

Since its inception, RGGI has achieved a compelling track record of success. In member states, carbon emissions from power plants have fallen by 45 percent from a base level measured in 2006-2008. These reductions in emissions have been accomplished both quickly and cost-effectively.

And RGGI has achieved these emissions reductions while simultaneously sparking economic growth and job creation beyond what was realized in non-RGGI states.

Besides mitigating global warming pollution, joining RGGI will also offer a way to address additional aspects of life threatening air pollution. The results of a study published last spring by researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who found that Pennsylvania leads the nation in per capita premature deaths caused by air pollution, were shocking. The study concluded that air pollution caused more than 4,800 Pennsylvanians to die prematurely in 2018. Pennsylvania had the third largest number of premature deaths caused by air pollution, and the highest rate of premature deaths per resident. Why is this happening when clean air is a right enumerated in our state constitution?

In closing, I urge that Pennsylvania join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. We need to clean the air, create and retain sustainable jobs, and forge more healthful, equitable and resilient communities in Pennsylvania, and we can not afford to wait.