



Stephen Hoffman

From: Elissa Weiss <elissamweiss@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 11:39 PM
To: EP, RegComments
Subject: [External] Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

***ATTENTION:** This email message is from an external sender. Do not open links or attachments from unknown sources. To report suspicious email, forward the message as an attachment to CWOPA_SPAM@pa.gov.*

Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

My name is Dr. Elissa Weiss. I live in Indiana Township in Allegheny County. I am an Internal Medicine physician. And I am writing to strongly urge the EQB and DEP to act quickly and definitively on the rule-making that enables Pennsylvania to participate in the very effective and beneficial Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). I urge you to do so in the interest of improving the physical, mental, and economic health and welfare of the citizens of Pennsylvania both now, and in the long term, by accomplishing real and meaningful climate action through PA becoming a participant in RGGI.

Why is it critical to make this commitment?

Imagine that, as in a number of prior instances, you've spent a restless night coughing, with difficulty moving air in and out of your lungs. You rouse, exhausted, and have difficulty making it to the bathroom because of shortness of breath. An ambulance ride to the Emergency Room and later admission to the hospital finds you sitting at the edge of the bed because you have trouble moving air to breathe and can't lean back to rest very much or very long despite treatment. Rest is minimal. It's a challenge to even eat, or talk, or pay attention to anything else. You need assistance to walk because of the shortness of breath.

You slowly improve, but it takes hours to days, and the anxiety that the treatments won't be effective is ever present. There is the concern about how much this hospitalization will cost, about its effects on your family, on your ability to continue in your home, about other medical problems like cardiac disease and diabetes being destabilized in the process of this worsening of your chronic lung disease, called COPD, the third leading cause of death in the United States according to 2011 CDC data.

It's all overwhelming. And, it can readily happen again, particularly with exposure to environmental pollutants such as those emitted during electric power generation with fossil fuels.

This is only one of the major reasons why it is critical for the EQB and DEP to act in order to enable Pennsylvania to participate in RGGI. More than 6% of adults in PA, more than 693,000, have been diagnosed with COPD as of 2015, resulting in 18,743 (Medicare alone) hospitalizations, and in 2018, 6,400 deaths.

Compared with people without COPD, sufferers have only poor/fair health status and often have a need to limit activity. Surveys show that they experience 14 or more poor mental health days of the previous 30 days, and no exercise in the previous month, as well as revealing that health care costs are a major issue for them.

CDC Prevention and Treatment guidelines for this illness critically include eliminating exposure to environmental pollutants.

Triggering pollutants that endanger these individuals, as well as those with other prominent medical conditions like Coronary Artery Disease, are produced in major part by PA's power sector, one of the most polluting in the country. These pollutants comprise particulates, and greenhouse gases and their precursors, a number of which are major causes of climate change.

Why join RGGI??
Because it works.

Between 2009 and 2014 RGGI helped participating states reduce power sector emissions by almost half, exceeding the reductions of the rest of the country by 90%. At the same time, participating states' Gross State Product and per-capita GDP increased. The beneficial effects of reduction of air pollution were associated with improvement in health parameters, with significant resultant economic benefit in the billions of dollars from avoided health effects. Very notably, these effects have been demonstrated to spill over to surrounding states. The health effects analyzed in two major studies include:

- outcomes in adult and infant mortality;
- acute bronchitis and other respiratory symptoms;
- preterm birth and term low birth weight with their potential health and developmental sequelae;
- autism spectrum disorders, with their likely causal association with exposure to air pollution prenatally and during developmental periods; and
- asthma.

Of the above, asthma alone was responsible for more than 18,000 hospitalizations in 2013, with blacks and Hispanics experiencing higher inpatient hospitalizations rates.

These health benefits add to other beneficial outcomes from participating in RGGI that are associated with reducing air pollutants which distinctly contribute to climate change and its effects. These outcomes include a reduction in the likelihood of extreme weather events that result in both flooding and drought, as well as a reduction in the likelihood of less favorable conditions for the expansion of certain vector-borne infectious diseases such as Lyme Disease. This illness is a potentially disabling disease for which Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of cases.

Pennsylvania's own 2020 Climate Change Impact Assessment describes serious adverse climate change impacts on our aging infrastructure; on the water quality of our communities and those downstream; and on our substantial farming industry due to the harmful effects of shifting environmental conditions on the cultivation of crops we rely on, and the effects on our considerable livestock industry.

Participation in RGGI, it is predicted, can result in a net increase in 1000's of good-paying, clean jobs in PA, direct assistance with energy bills, and the addition of 100's-of-millions to billions of dollars to PA's Gross State Product while putting PA on the road to a cleaner, more energy-efficient, more productive economy and society with improved quality of life.

The process must include helping communities that have been a part of the power sector transition from their part in energy production. It must also focus support on populations that have been disproportionately negatively affected by this polluting industry.

The resultant conversion to improved economic outcomes, coupled with benefits in even the limited number of health outcomes examined in health benefit analyses, and added to the inestimable benefits of preserving "the ecosystems and natural resources that support human livelihood", make enabling PA's participation in RGGI a constitutional and moral imperative for advancing the common good.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this exceedingly important issue. And thank you for your diligent attention to these matters.

Elissa Weiss, M.D.
134 Dennis Dr.
Glenshaw, PA 15116
elissamweiss@gmail.com

DEP, Pennsylvania Greenhouse Gas Inventory, 2020

U.S. Energy Information Administration, Electricity Analysis and Projections, Detailed State Data, 2020

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, The Investment of RGGI Proceeds in 2015, October 2017

Assessing the Health Benefits of Air Pollution Reduction for Children, *Env. Health Perspectives*, Wong et al., Feb. 2004

Co-Benefits to Children's Health of the U.S. Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, *Env. Health Perspectives*, Perera et al., July 2020

Pennsylvania Climate Change Impacts Assessment Update, April 2020

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Analysis, Analysis of the Public Health Impacts of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Manion, Zarakas et al., January 2017

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

COPD in the United States: How is Your State Doing?, COPD Foundation, 2018