



## Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

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Hello, my name is Edith Ruiz and I am a resident of Gibsonia, in the North hills of Pittsburgh PA. I have lived in Pennsylvania since 2011 when I moved from my home state of Alabama to be with my fiancé (now husband). In the time since, I have come to love and enjoy all the beautiful areas and natural spaces that we've explored in the surrounding western PA. I come from a family of conservationists and environmental activists so I recognize many of the environmental struggles this state has and still faces today. Clean air, improved water quality, and green energy have been extremely important to this state for a long time before me. Now with many others in this beautiful state, I join the efforts of conservationists and environmentalists before me and those who are still working hard today to achieve these aforementioned goals.

Today we are here to discuss and champion the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to be implemented in Pennsylvania by 2022. RGGI provides the framework for Pennsylvania to invest in clean energy and energy efficiency programs to save people money, and create homegrown jobs with family-sustaining wages all while addressing climate change by cutting carbon pollution.

### **What are the benefits of RGGI to the residents of Pennsylvania?**

As a result of the state's polluting power plants, Pennsylvanians are exposed to high levels of air pollution. These plants spew carbon dioxide as well dangerous sulfur dioxide, smog-forming nitrogen oxides, and particulates. Reducing carbon pollution from these plants will clean up the air we breathe resulting in health impacts we can all benefit from.

### **Health impacts**

- Asthma, cardiovascular disease, COPD, and other respiratory diseases impact Pennsylvania residents by the thousands, leading to premature deaths, and making people more likely to die if they contract COVID-19, thus creating millions in annual healthcare costs. Cleaner air will reduce these serious health and financial impacts.
- RGGI creates incentives for cleaner energy generation significantly reducing emissions from SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and mercury — resulting in nearly \$5.7B in health benefits, including healthcare savings since 2008.

Pennsylvania's participation in RGGI was necessary even prior to the COVID19 pandemic, so it is absolutely crucial now as it creates a path toward a more stable climate, healthier air, a robust energy economy, and lower electricity bills. A poll conducted last year found that 79 percent of

Pennsylvanians support a proposal to zero out carbon pollution from power plants, with Pennsylvanians overall preferring lawmakers who support strong action to combat climate change.

### **Acting on Climate Change**

- We need to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and eliminate them from our economy by 2050. RGGI is a critical first step Pennsylvania must take to do our fair share to address and mitigate a changing climate.
- Climate change will not wait for us to act sometime in the future. We must act and implement RGGI now to prepare ourselves against the most severe impacts of climate change. The longer we wait, the more challenging and expensive the actions necessary we have to make will become.
- Ten states currently participate in RGGI: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont (Virginia will officially begin participating in 2021). **Pennsylvania should be next!**
- These RGGI states have been able to successfully reduce emissions while growing their regional economy. Over the period of 2005-2013, RGGI states experienced a carbon reduction of over 40% from electricity generation while the regional economy grew by 8%.

Studies have shown that the most cost-effective investment of RGGI dollars is investment in energy efficiency programs. In 2008, RGGI states invested just \$575 million in energy efficiency programs; by 2014, the RGGI states were investing \$1.74 billion annually, meaning lower bills, more efficient appliances and increased job growth in the industry. Participation in RGGI will bring in hundreds of millions of dollars per year from fossil fuel polluters to Pennsylvania for investment in energy efficiency programs and local renewable energy. Both offset energy costs for families and create good-paying jobs that will improve our economy across the board.

### **Clean Energy Economy**

- Investing in clean energy through climate action like RGGI increases local job growth and keeps energy production right here in our state — without the cost of pollution!
- The Department of the Environmental Protection projects that RGGI revenues for Pennsylvania will total \$2.4 billion by 2030.
- From 2015-2017, RGGI led to \$1.4B in net economic benefits across the region. Since the program began, RGGI states have experienced increased jobs, long-run electricity cost reductions, and decreased emissions.
- The GDP of RGGI states has grown by 47%, outpacing growth in the rest of the country by 31%.
- In that same time period, New York received \$345 million in RGGI auction proceeds. These funds have

been reinvested in efforts to improve residential energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy projects, assisting low-income consumers in paying their electricity bills, and training workers for jobs in green collar careers.

RGGI accumulated more than \$2.5 billion in revenue over the first 8 years. From 2008-2013, 67% of the RGGI proceeds were used for efficiency, greenhouse gas reductions, renewable energy, or electricity bill assistance. From 2008-2017 electricity prices dropped by 5.7% in RGGI states as they went up by 8.6% throughout the rest of the country. Through programs like RGGI, families can save on electric utility bills through energy efficiency and reduced consumption.

### **Affordability**

- A strong RGGI will fund programs that help families use less energy, spending less on housing and electricity costs and keeping people from having to choose between spending money on energy, food and medical care.
- A nonpartisan firm, Resources for the Future, found if proceeds are invested in a combination of energy efficiency projects and customer bill rebates, the average residential bill is projected to decrease by \$1.45 per month, saving customers about \$17 a year on average.

In conclusion, RGGI provides the framework for Pennsylvania to invest in clean energy and energy efficiency programs to save people money, and create homegrown jobs with family-sustaining wages all while addressing a changing climate by cutting carbon pollution.

Thank you for your time today and for considering this very important framework which works for all Pennsylvanians.