Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

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Good Afternoon,

My name is Dr. Jennifer Baka. I am an Assistant Professor of Geography at Penn State. I am also a member of the DEP Environmental Justice Advisory Board. I am testifying today in my personal capacity as a resident of Pennsylvania.

I am testifying to express my strong support for RGGI. Joining the initiative will be a decisive step towards reducing the environmental, public health and economic impacts of climate change, on of the greatest challenges currently facing the state—and the planet.

According to the 2017 Monitoring Report of RGGI Co2 emissions in 2015-17 were 45.3% below the 2006-08 baseline period. Thus, the initiative is having a real impact at reducing carbon emissions.

Further, RGGI auctions have generated $3.2 billion in revenue to date, most of which has been used to support investments in energy efficiency and clean energy.

These achievements have occurred without raising electricity prices and without impeding economic growth. In fact, electricity prices have decreased about 2% per year on average in 7 of 9 RGGI states. According to a report by The Analysis Group, a leading non-partisan consulting firm, RGGI has contributed $1.4 billion in economic value to member states between 2015-17. These gains have been achieved without negatively impacting jobs.

The DEP's own analyses project similar benefits for PA. These include a potential 25% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2030; a net increase of 27,000 jobs in the Commonwealth and nearly $2 billion in Gross State Product.

From my point of view, PA is uniquely positioned to benefit even more from joining RGGI. According to analyses conducted by the DEP and the federal Department of Energy, the energy efficiency and clean energy sectors are two of the fastest growing employment sectors both nationally and within PA. These sectors that offer high paying jobs that can keep workers and their families here in PA. However, the DEP analysis emphasized the need for workforce development to better qualify Pennsylvanians to qualify for these jobs. Using auction revenues to Invest in clean energy workforce development is a way to build this much needed and highly sought after workforce here in PA.

==Overall, RGGI will help to reduce carbon pollution, improve public health and stimulate economic growth. In contrast to popular discourses often promoted by fossil fuel advocates, environmental regulation is not at odds with economic development.==

My one "ask" for the Board is to consider investing a portion of the auction revenues in Environmental Justice communities throughout the state. These regions have historically been disproportionally impacted by environmental degradation, often related to energy development, and more recently, COVID-19. Allocating funding to reverse these injustices can help to undo historic injustices in these communities.

I will end on a personal note. I am the grand-daughter of coal miners from the Scranton area. I never met my paternal grandfather as he died in a mining accident when my own father was 4. My material grandfather lived into his 80s despite suffering black lung. I grew up in a small town with a mine fire and suffered chronic asthma as a child and often missed 30 days of school per year due to my poor respiratory health.

RGGI offers an important opportunity for us, as Pennsylvanians, to erase this legacy of environmental degradation, which, as my own experience demonstrates, often spans generations. Instead of continuing our legacy as a sacrifice zone to literally fuel and power economic development elsewhere in the nation, RGGI gives us the chance to reverse our legacy of carbon lock-in and chart a new course as a clean energy leader.

Thank you for your time and for your efforts in transforming the energy and environmental legacies of our state.