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Testifying on behalf of Pennsylvania Farmers Union

Good afternoon. My name is Michael Kovach. I am a sustainable, grass-based livestock farmer from South Pymatuning TWP, Mercer County, and Vice President/Policy Director for Pennsylvania Farmers Union. A Geologist and Earth Scientist by education, prior to becoming a farmer in 2008, I was a partner in a small natural gas producing company which produced natural gas from the terrigenous Devonian sandstones in Southwest PA. I would like to first thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Family Farmers who feed our Commonwealth in good times, and bad, on the importance of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, as well as other legislation aimed toward reducing and mitigation the effects of climate change.

For farmers, the realities of our changing climate are undeniable, and seem worse with each new season. Extremes are continually becoming more extreme. Annual precipitation is coming in fewer, heavier, events. Planting and harvesting seasons are shifting. Pest populations affecting both crops and livestock are exploding, and our ability to produce the food that feeds Pennsylvanians is being challenged —just when we need it most. RGGI is an important step toward the ultimate end goal of mitigating the climate changes already threatening our food supply.

RGGI also promises to bolster an already rapidly growing renewable energy industry in our Commonwealth, providing jobs and income in rural and urban areas alike. By some estimates, new job growth in renewable energy have outstripped new jobs in the more conventional sourced energy sector 2-1 over the past couple of years. Given the tone of the incoming Presidential Administration, paired with Governor Wolf's Administration's obvious and ongoing commitment to a greener, brighter future, Pennsylvania is well-positioned to become a leader in renewable energy jobs, much as it did in lower-Carbon natural gas-fired electric production. As part of any such initiative to shift away from traditional fossil fuels, care should be taken to ensure those Pennsylvanians displaced by such a shift (such as coal miners, and coal-fired power plant workers) are well positioned and trained to move into the new economy seamlessly.

In 2017, National Farmers Union became the first major Agricultural membership organization to adopt policy acknowledging the anthropogenic nature of climate change. Our policy acknowledges the need for the massive reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases from all sectors of the economy, but it also acknowledges the role that a more mindful approach to Agriculture can play in its mitigation. With those member-written policy tenets as precedent, it is my pleasure to both endorse Pennsylvania's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and encourage DEP and other agencies to continue to keep Agriculture at the table for future initiatives around this most important of topics. It is the ONLY industry currently capable

of not only participating in reducing emissions, but sequestering the “legacy” carbon that would still be causing trouble in our atmosphere for years to come, even if emissions were to drop to zero tomorrow. Thank you for your time, and for your hard work on this important initiative.