

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Walter Tsou. I am the Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility in Pennsylvania and on behalf of PSR PA, I strongly urge Pennsylvania to enter RGGI.



Air pollution sees no geographic boundaries. The current map of states that are participating in RGGI shows the role that our state plays. We are literally surrounded by New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware – all states that have chosen to join RGGI. Our failure to participate means that we will be stuck in a 20th century energy mentality. Our fossil fuel burning will only continue to pollute the air with health consequences, esp. for our precious children. Meanwhile, our surrounding states will have the funds to invest in the future with renewable energy saving billions in future health care costs. Pennsylvania needs to get on board.

I draw your attention to three independent studies that have looked at RGGI and health. The first two looked at children's health and RGGI. In April 2019, Lee and Park published on the "Impacts of the RGGI on infant mortality: a quasi-experimental study in the USA, 2003-2014" in the *open British Medical Journal*¹. In the study, they compared RGGI states against those who did not participate in RGGI, including Pennsylvania. Because the impact of air pollution is most immediately seen in vital statistics like neonatal and infant mortality, this early study gives us a sense of whether RGGI impacts health. They found that neonatal mortality in the first month of life and infant mortality in the first year of life were statistically improved in RGGI states over those states who did not participate in RGGI. Infant mortality worsened with increases in CO2 reemphasizing the important contribution of air pollution on developing infant lungs. Infants with damaged lungs are much more likely to have permanent life-long damage to their respiratory systems with long term costs to our healthcare system. This large state-based comparison study emphasizes the unquestionable early benefit of RGGI to our children.

A second study in the July 2020 *Environmental Health Perspectives* entitled "Co-benefits to Children's Health of the US Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative" by Pereira, et. al² looked at ambient PM2.5 concentrations between 2009 - 2014. They used EPA risk assessment and health data to create a Mapping and Analysis tool. This tool was used to estimate known relationships between air pollution, esp. PM2.5 and a wide spectrum of known childhood illnesses. Using this mapping modeling tool, they estimated the impact of RGGI on illnesses and associated costs and found that conservatively RGGI avoided 537 childhood asthma cases, 112 preterm births, 98 cases of autism spectrum disorder, and 56 cases of low birth weight. They estimated that the cost savings for RGGI was immediately between \$200 and \$358 million. RGGI provided substantial child health benefits with immediate and long-term future economic benefits to society.

Finally, in 2017 Abt Associates prepared an independent analysis of the public health impacts of RGGI between 2009 - 2014³. This study was very similar in methodology to the Pereira, et. al. study that I just mentioned but this time focused on adult health. Based on their study they conservatively estimated that RGGI saved between 300 and 830 premature adult deaths, avoided hundreds of cases of heart attacks and acute bronchitis and thousands of cases of asthma. Significantly, they estimated between hundreds of hospital admissions, and hundreds of asthma ER visits were avoided. Tens of thousands of lost workdays were avoided because of RGGI. Their estimated savings of avoided health costs was between \$3 to \$8.3 billion dollars. Every state that participated in RGGI benefited. Pennsylvania would do just as well if not better because we will be surrounded by states who will be participating in RGGI with the exception of West Virginia and Ohio.

I want to conclude by saying that the world believes the climate change is real and represents an existential threat to the planet. Pennsylvania is the 3rd leading state producer of greenhouse gases which means that we are a major contributor to the United States' contribution to global warming. RGGI has a ten-year record of success in both creating incentives and funding a transition to reduce carbon emissions using a market-based approach that has won bipartisan support. It's time for Pennsylvania to join RGGI.

¹ [10.1136/bmjopen-2018-024735](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-024735)

² <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP6706>

³ <https://www.abtassociates.com/sites/default/files/files/Projects/executive%20summary%20RGGI.pdf>