



Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation
David A Heayn
417 Market Street, Lewisburg PA 17837 (Office)
30 S 8th Street, Lewisburg PA 17837 (Home)
director@paipl.org
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light

PA IPL 2020 RGGI Testimony

Good afternoon. My name is David Heayn-Menendez I am from Lewisburg and I am testifying as Executive Director of Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light, a statewide climate justice organization which takes climate change to be the moral and ethical issue of our time. I am here to tell you today that faith communities across PA believe we have a responsibility to each other and must take action where and when we can against climate change. Responsible planning and investment in our future is the moral expectation all citizens. Therefore, we must move forward in favor of RGGI to live our moral responsibility to truly be stewards of creation.

Every tradition teaches us to care for the earth. I believe that we are not only accountable to each other but also to God for our actions. One needs to look no further scripture for guidance. Hundreds of verses concern the environment as we are taught over and over that greater even than the creation of mankind is the creation of the heavens and the earth.

Pennsylvania is the third-largest energy-producing state and one of the largest greenhouse gas polluter in the US. We more than any state already in RGGI have the most to gain and the greatest potential impact on climate change by joining the Initiative. The future of our state and the planet is in fair and collaborative agreements which lead to growth, a healthier environment, and a future which benefits all Pennsylvanians through better stable jobs, lower energy costs, and improved air quality. That is not to speak even of the larger effects such efforts would have on mitigating the catastrophic effects of climate change on weather events.

My community, a river valley community, Lewisburg, sits on the banks of the Susquehanna River. We have been devastated by flooding in the past and as a member of Borough Council I am acutely aware of the edge of a knife up on which my community and countless others along the river sit waiting for the next flood, as we continue to ignore the obvious and morally right choices which our neighbors have taken to mitigate climate change.

RGGI is a simple, cost effective, flexible and **proven** cap-and-invest program. Without a program like RGGI in place Pennsylvania's carbon emissions will simply rise and continue to choke our cities and pollute our natural areas. This is not a fantasy or a radical initiative. It is one backed by data, supported by science, and one which keeps up with evident economic trends. We can no long rely on our coal mines and steel plants. The jobs such an initiative will bring will lift thousands out of poverty, increasing the tax base, improving schools and infrastructure, and giving hard working families a better future. The States that participate in RGGI have already seen more than \$2 billion in proceeds, allowing for vital and necessary reinvestment. We have a

fundamental responsibility, a moral imperative, to our fellow human beings to improve our world and protect our communities and the generations to come.

Lastly, the health costs of the fossil fuel industry have weighed heavily on Pennsylvania families and when those jobs went away towns were slowly suffocated by debt, health issues, and the lack of opportunities.

During COVID is has become even more evident to anyone paying attention that Frontline and in particular BIPOC communities across America have suffered the most during the pandemic, and not least of all because of the air pollutants which concentrate in the areas least served by our healthcare industry. People are dying disproportionately in these communities, not because they are taking the virus any less seriously, but because the pollution we continue to pump into the air contributes to asthma, respiratory illnesses, and many other major factors in the comorbidities we have seen ravage communities this year. RGGI is one step towards addressing the systemic racial and socio-economic injustices that millions of Pennsylvanians face every day.

A future with good jobs opportunities, thriving communities supported by a responsible government, and breathable air which doesn't poison our lungs is what I want for my two young boys and the world they will inherit.

The saints and the prophets of mankind have demonstrated for us throughout history the kindness, care and moral responsibility we must have for creation and for one another. The majority of Pennsylvanians are committed to becoming guardians of the earth once more and I hope the testimony you hear will guide and direct your moral compass to accept RGGI and to create a better future for us all.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY