



Joy Bergey's RGGI testimony to the EQB
December 9, 2020

My name is Joy Bergey. A lifelong resident of Pennsylvania, I live in Springfield Township, Montgomery County. I speak today about the importance of swiftly implementing the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) from two perspectives: as a private citizen committed to fighting climate change and environmental injustice, and as Vice Chair of Springfield Township's Environmental Advisory Commission.

We Pennsylvanians have an outsized footprint in our responsibility for climate change:

- Pennsylvania's electric power sector is currently the fourth dirtiest in the nation,
- We are the third worst state in terms of greenhouse gas pollution,
- We are the second largest producer of natural gas and the third largest producer of coal.

The good news is that we Pennsylvanians can move forward with RGGI with assurance about the benefits we're likely to reap, based on the successful experience of the other RGGI states,

- The participating RGGI states have cut carbon pollution by a remarkable 47% in the last twelve years, outpacing the rest of the country by 90%,
- And there's other very encouraging news from the Acadia Center: Economic growth in the RGGI states has outpaced the rest of the country by 31% during this time.

So it's not surprising that RGGI is projected to deliver the following benefits to Pennsylvania by 2030:

- An addition of \$1.9 billion dollars to our economy,
- More than 27,000 new jobs, and
- \$6.3 billion in health benefits.

So much for that tired old acorn of "economy versus environment." RGGI will give us a stronger and cleaner economy, better for our children and grandchildren in so many ways.

Let's take a look at the \$6+ billion in projected health benefits. This would result from 30,000 fewer hospital visits due to asthma and other respiratory diseases, heart attacks, stroke, diabetes and high blood pressure.

It's equally important to understand how cleaning up our dirty power plants is a matter of social equity and fairness. Think about where dirty power plants are built: almost always, they're in low-income areas, which are disproportionately inhabited by people of color. Dirty power plants don't get built in places like Springfield Township, where I live.

That doesn't free us of our personal responsibility to recognize that the electricity we use in our homes is hurting others who live near those dirty power plants but can't readily get out of harm's way. RGGI goes after the environmental racism that is baked into our electricity system

writ large. RGGI doesn't solve the whole problem, but it takes an important step towards social justice.

I'll say a few words on behalf of what our elected leaders are doing in Springfield Township in Montgomery County. Our township commissioners unanimously passed a resolution almost two years ago that we aim to use 100% clean, renewable electricity by 2035, and 100% clean building heat and vehicles by 2050 – both in our municipal operations and in the broader community.

We're working hard towards these goals because our leaders in Springfield know that this is the path to a better, more secure economy and climate.

All seven of our Township Commissioners are in full support of the swift implementation of RGGI. I'm proud to live here.

In closing, I thank Governor Wolf, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Environmental Quality Board for their leadership in promulgating this rule. I support not just RGGI, but its rapid implementation in Pennsylvania so that our citizens can start to reap the benefits from a cleaner, more stable atmosphere and a stronger economy as quickly as possible.

Thank you.