



EQB Virtual Public Hearing | December 9, 2020 | Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

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I am providing testimony, as a private citizen, on the ***Proposed Rulemaking: CO2 Budget Trading Program***. As a child, in the 1960s, I grew up in a coastal environment, in Connecticut, that adhered to sound ecological principles, in the stewarding of clean air, water, and land. In the 1970s, I participated in what was, at the time, a “back-to-the-land” movement, living in Vermont, where environmentalism was not just a word, but a way of life. In the 1980s–1990s, I lived in two well-known polluted environments in our country: The lower West Side of New York City, long before there was gentrification; and adjacent to the oil refineries in Houston, Texas. In these two situations, I experienced, first-hand, what living in less-than-ideal air and water quality felt like. I also witnessed the impact of environmental racism, within the inner-city wards, and was moved to participate in advocacy and action groups, spearheading initiatives related to food sourcing by assisting citizens in building community vegetable gardens.

Having a child, while living in Houston, prompted my family to reassess how our exposure to high levels of air pollution could impact our long-term health. Our living conditions of a below sea level topography, and robust city expansion with little protective zoning regulations, combined with the increasing damaging storm surges, pointed to much uncertainty for a safe and healthy future. This brought my family to move to Pennsylvania, in 1998, where we have lived on the border of the city of Lancaster, on 2 acres of land, for 20 years. What I have witnessed, over these 20 years, is the initial flourishing and the subsequent slow and steady degradation of our natural habitat, that was once abundant with flora and fauna, as a result of climate change, coupled with the erosion of our waterway border, Little Conestoga Creek, the 21.1-mile-long tributary of the Conestoga River, in Pennsylvania.

As an individual who is deeply connected to my faith and our calling by God to care for creation, I support policies that protect our natural resources that sustain all Earthly life. I also advocate for thoughtful, multidimensional solutions that address our environmental crises that impact disenfranchised populations in disproportionate ways, equating to environmental racism, leaving these minority populations exposed to higher rates of pollution, radiation, contamination in their food, water, and living environments, with little or no access to voice their concerns. By supporting the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Cap-and-Invest program, it is my hope that it will incentivize change amongst the biggest polluters in Pennsylvania and our surrounding states. It is also my hope that the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Cap-and-Invest program will distribute those funds to the poorest people first, while advocating for policies that shift to renewable resources and provide for better economic development, education, job training, housing stability, and continued investment in underserved communities. As I digest today’s news, of the finalizing of an EPA rule that could prevent strengthening measures to combat air pollution and the climate crisis in the future, I feel that supporting productive initiatives, such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), is our moral obligation and a definitive first step to helping to secure the sustainability of all life. I want to thank the EQB for listening to my testimony this evening.