

Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

December 9, 2020



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Good afternoon. My name is Brenda Smith. I'm the Executive Director of the Nine Mile Watershed Association and a resident of the City of Pittsburgh. Thank you for this opportunity to testify about the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. I support Pennsylvania's participation in this initiative for three main reasons: 1) the urgent need to address global climate change and Pennsylvania's responsibility to act, 2) the personal health impacts I have experienced due to Allegheny County's serious air quality problem, and 3) the importance of helping our most vulnerable Pennsylvania residents by creating jobs and making their homes more energy efficient.

Regarding climate change: as I'm sure the Department is well aware, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has told us that the consensus of the overwhelming majority of scientists worldwide is that we have only a very short window left to eliminate fossil fuel use before it becomes impossible to avoid the most dire consequences of global climate change. We must begin as soon as possible moving much faster toward renewable energy if we are to reduce emissions to the necessary levels within approximately 10 to 12 years. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is an excellent first step to move us in that direction.

I confess I was somewhat shocked to learn that the state of Pennsylvania alone is responsible for 1% of the entire world's carbon pollution – our state admits more CO2 than 172 countries that have signed the Paris climate agreement! While there are nine states that are already participating in RGGI, the power plants in Pennsylvania emit very nearly as much greenhouse gas as those in all of those nine states combined. Clearly we have a responsibility to act, and RGGI will make a real difference. The emissions in those states currently participating have been reduced by 45% since the program began in 2009.

My son and his wife are both 34 years old, and are hoping to have children soon. I worry constantly about what kind of world their children will inherit. The changes induced by greenhouse gases are already very evident throughout the world, including more

destructive storms, more frequent and destructive wildfires, and many days each year when it is too hot for people to safely work outside in large portions of the world including the southern United States. Right here in Pennsylvania we can already see effects on plants and trees; planting zones have shifted. It makes me immensely sad to know that we will very likely lose the maple syrup industry in Pennsylvania because sugar maples can't tolerate the warmer temperatures year-round that are now already almost certainly locked in. But if we act now we may be able to save other Pennsylvania crops from the same fate.

As the department is also aware, Allegheny County has some of the worst air quality in the country, and climate change will only aggravate this problem. I frequently suffer migraine headaches on the days with the worst air quality. I now check the Purple Air monitor website every morning to see whether I can take my dog on a longer walk, or need to keep it short to avoid the bad air. If we join RGGI, in just a few years this situation will begin to improve as it has in all of the states already participating. Their carbon pollution has been cut by more than half. Why shouldn't Pennsylvanians also enjoy fewer premature deaths, fewer visits to the emergency room for asthma, and fewer lost workdays due to the health impacts of air pollution?

Finally, when this pandemic ends, job creation will be a top priority, and the most economically disadvantaged Pennsylvanians will be struggling even more to afford the basics. Joining RGGI will generate a pool of money which can be used to make homes more energy-efficient. This will create good paying jobs. While I don't think there's any reason to make any major changes to the RGGI rules, because it is working so well in other states, I do think we should prioritize investing RGGI funds in our Environmental Justice communities.

It is rare to have an opportunity to participate in an initiative that has so many benefits for so many people. I urge the Department to move forward and seize this opportunity.