



## Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

Henry McKay  
Pennsylvania Program Director, Solar United Neighbors  
327 Whipple St, Pittsburgh, PA 15218  
[henrypmckay@gmail.com](mailto:henrypmckay@gmail.com)  
412-440-8934

My name is Henry McKay and I am speaking on behalf of Solar United Neighbors in support of Pennsylvania joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Solar United Neighbors is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. In Pennsylvania, we are organizing a grassroots movement of solar owners who believe that the energy system of the future must be one that is clean, fair, and shares its benefits broadly. We believe that RGGI is an important tool to help us achieve this vision.

The solar owners in our network represent a subset of the over 26,000 solar installations across the Commonwealth. All over Pennsylvania, people, businesses, and communities are investing in solar to dramatically reduce their environmental impact and save money. But these solar owners are not satisfied with just having solar panels on their own rooftops; they want to build a fair and equitable energy system that benefits everyone. This is impossible without policy change.

RGGI can help create a cleaner, fairer energy system. By capping and reducing climate-forcing carbon pollution, RGGI helps level the playing field between fossil fuels and renewables. And by reinvesting its proceeds into expanding access to renewables and supporting fossil fuel-impacted frontline communities, RGGI can accelerate this transition in a way that leaves no one behind.

Let's be clear: RGGI or not, coal is on its way out. But simply leaving energy markets to transition on their own would not only be insufficient from a climate action perspective, it would also be unjust. Many Pennsylvania communities still depend on coal for jobs and tax revenue. These communities, through their hard work and ingenuity, have powered Pennsylvania and this nation for the past century. Many of the families whom Solar United Neighbors has helped go solar live in these communities and have worked in the coal industry themselves. Some of them are speaking in support of RGGI at these very hearings. We owe these families and their communities a just transition to a clean energy economy.

RGGI can support this just transition for coal-dependent communities in a number of ways, including grants to workforce development organizations, community colleges, and high schools for clean energy job training; grants to fund the remediation and redevelopment of areas used to mine, process, and burn coal; and grants for solar installations on public buildings, which would lower energy costs for local governments while supporting solar jobs.

Our current energy system is inequitable and expensive. On average, low-income households in Pennsylvania pay two to three times more for energy than wealthier households pay as a share of their income. In Pittsburgh, where I live, Black and Latinx household energy burdens are approximately double the citywide average. And in a pandemic that has hit the most vulnerable among us the hardest, these inequities are being exacerbated. But if we use RGGI revenue to make solar energy affordable to low-income Pennsylvania households, we can build a more just energy system while also reducing carbon pollution.

Pennsylvania has been a leader in the energy technologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We can continue this leadership by embracing the energy technologies of the twenty-first century. RGGI is an opportunity to accomplish this while protecting our health, our environment, and the most vulnerable among us.