



My name is Dr. Ned Ketyer. I am a pediatrician living in southwestern PA. I am a husband and father of three adult children. I am speaking as a private citizen today but I must disclose to you that I am a member of the AAP Council on Environmental Health, a consultant for SWPA Environmental Health Project, a board member of PSR-PA, and a Climate Reality Project leader.

Over the last several days you have heard testimony overwhelmingly in favor of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. I want to point out that those who deny the benefits of joining RGGI also deny the climate emergency we are in. You will not hear the words “climate change” or “health” in their statements. Not one word.

But that’s really what we are talking about today. There are things we already know about climate change and about health — objective, evidence-based facts — that we don’t need to debate any longer. The fact is, time has run out to do the right thing and do something we should have been doing for years — for decades: reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector in order to slow and then stop the climate crisis.

The problem is, we don’t have any more time to spin our wheels, debate and deflect, and then have our elected representatives do nothing. That’s not a political statement. It’s based on the 10 words that describe the overwhelming scientific consensus about climate change: Experts Agree. It’s Real; It’s Us; It’s Bad; There’s Hope. But there is only hope if we decide that RGGI is needed. And there is only hope if we all recognize that RGGI alone won’t solve the climate crisis. We need to use every tool in our toolbox to solve this. And RGGI is a really important tool.

So let’s just begin by acknowledging what we all learned in grade-school science and math. Extracting and burning fossil fuels produces emissions of greenhouse gases. Those greenhouse gases accumulate in the atmosphere, trapping heat and warming the air, the land, and the oceans, and causing the climate to change well beyond prior human experience. And then it’s important to recognize how the changing climate directly impacts our health from long and intense heat waves; from more powerful extreme weather events and excessive precipitation and flooding here, and droughts and water scarcity elsewhere; from the growing threats of vector borne diseases such as Lyme disease which is a growing public health problem here in PA. Air quality is worse in a warming world and especially in PA where air quality pretty much stinks as a baseline. The list goes on — you can’t have a discussion about RGGI without using the words “climate change” and health.

The primary principle in solving human-caused climate change and improving health is simple: stop expelling more greenhouse gas pollution into the atmosphere.

I will let others in this hearing tell you all about how RGGI is successful in states that have adopted it: how it significantly reduces harmful pollution like fine particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals and greenhouse gases; how it objectively improves health and saves lives. And we should be clear: improving health and avoiding health costs associated with pollution from powerplants will bring enormous economic benefits to our state and citizens.

Parents and pediatricians like me can’t control the air our children breathe. Agencies like the DEP and Environmental Quality Board can. You can help protect the health of my children, our children, and generations to come — and the planet they live on — by joining neighbor states and adopting the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Thank you. 609 words; 4:35 (spoken slowly)