



**Testimony of Kindra Mohr, Esq. on behalf of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia to the Environmental Quality Board for the Proposed Rulemaking on CO2 Budget Trading Program (the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative or RGGI)**

Good afternoon. My name is Kindra Mohr and I am in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I am speaking today on behalf of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia or SBN.

Over the past 20 years, SBN has supported thousands of local independent businesses across the region that practice and measure success by the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profitability. Our members represent businesses with less than 50 employees across a wide range of sectors, including those in green infrastructure, clean energy, and food systems industries – all of which are deeply impacted by the State’s approach to energy efficiency and its investments in clean energy industries.

Today I offer strong support for RGGI on behalf of Pennsylvania’s local independent business community, and urge the DEP to swiftly implement a RGGI ruling that prioritizes energy efficiency investments.

RGGI is a story about economic growth and job creation. COVID-19 has drastically disrupted Pennsylvania’s economy, resulting in job losses and business closures. Yet, before the pandemic, clean energy, such as the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors, outpaced overall job growth in the Commonwealth by five times, and employed more than double the number of workers than the State’s entire fossil fuel industry. Energy efficiency is the most sizeable and predictable job creator among all the energy sectors, and once Pennsylvania officially links to RGGI, energy efficiency workers will be in demand to build, install, maintain, and improve equipment and infrastructure.

Furthermore, data suggests a disproportionate impact of the pandemic on local businesses and their employees, and clean energy sectors have been no exception. Faced with the irrefutable evidence that local businesses are the backbone of our economy, and the ongoing uncertainty that the pandemic brings, the State has a responsibility to prioritize local business recovery and invest in climate resilient infrastructure as fundamental elements of our economic recovery. One way to do so is through RGGI, a proven initiative that achieves both.

Relatedly, RGGI can also support equitable growth. Jobs in the energy efficiency sector offer a higher-than-average salary and cannot be outsourced. These jobs range from those in the trades, to engineers and designers, to legal, accounting, and administrative support. They all provide a foundation for elevating the standard of living for households across the State. In addition, auction proceeds can fund training centers and vocational programs for new workers to succeed in energy efficiency careers, particularly those transitioning from other energy sectors and individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds to ensure equitable, inclusive growth. Over time, this will help meet workforce



development needs, provide new opportunities in an expanding sector, and help Pennsylvania recover from the pandemic with equitable and climate resilient growth.

Moreover, in our current recession, we need to support low- and middle-income energy consumers. Economic and structural barriers still prevent residents and local independent businesses from participating in state-offered energy efficiency programs. RGGI proceeds can fill in gaps in existing low-income and small business energy efficiency programs, which would facilitate a more equitable economic recovery – one in which every dollar counts.

We are at a critical moment in the evolution of the energy industry amid major disruptions for local businesses and workers. RGGI will not only help rebuild our economy and our communities, but it will enable us to do so in a more equitable and climate resilient manner. I encourage the DEP to develop a RGGI rule that prioritizes investment in energy efficiency, which is best positioned to create jobs, lower customer bills, reduce emissions, and stimulate Pennsylvania’s economic recovery.