



Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation - December 9, 2020

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Implementing RGGI makes both moral and economic sense. As a state, we would not only live into to our constitutional responsibility to protect the right of all our citizens to clean air, but we would strengthen our economy and increase jobs.

My name is Rev. Linda Noonan, and I am the Senior Pastor at Chestnut Hill United Church in Philadelphia. I testify today on behalf of my congregation which is a member of POWER Interfaith. Through our Environmental Justice Center, we have been educating ourselves and the broader community about climate change for more than two decades, advocating for our elected leaders to take meaningful action to address what has now become the climate crisis.

We are seeing the ravages of climate change right now, right here in Philadelphia and across this state. Climate change and dirty energy disproportionately impact the most vulnerable among us: those living in poverty, communities of color, the elderly, and young children.

We are thus called by our faith to address the causes of climate change as a moral imperative. Hence our support for RGGI.

We must work hard to wean ourselves off fossil fuels as quickly as possible. This includes, of course, the coal and natural gas burned in the power plants that are the targets of RGGI.

The harm done by dirty power plants touches us all, but disproportionately hurts poor folk and people of color. These facilities are almost always built near low-income, Black and Brown communities which suffer the highest rates of asthma, respiratory diseases, and COVID-19. Unemployment in these areas is also higher and the land devalued because of environmental pollution. Cleaning up the pollution from these dirty plants will directly improve the health and economic stability of surrounding communities.

Chestnut Hill United Church supports RGGI's market-based approach of putting a price on carbon pollution and offering financial incentives to the power plant owners to lower emissions. Corporations driven by doing what is best for their profit margins cannot be expected to *voluntarily* do what is best for the people and the planet. Rules like RGGI make it easier for corporations to do what is right. Which only then makes it possible for the state to truly protect its citizens.

We know that this approach works: Carbon pollution has been cut by 47% in the other states that participate in RGGI, outpacing carbon pollution cuts in the rest of country by 90%. And not only did their economies *not* suffer, but they grew *stronger*. Economic growth in the RGGI states has outpaced the rest of the country by 31% during this time, according to the Acadia Center. An in-depth analysis for the state's Department of Environmental Protection confirmed that Pennsylvania would see similar success: RGGI will lead to a net increase of more than 27,000 jobs and add \$1.9 billion to the state's economy by 2030.

Our State Constitution guarantees Pennsylvania's citizens an absolute right to clean air. This means that it's our *constitutional* responsibility, as well as our *moral* responsibility, to push for clean air for every one of our citizens, no matter their class, race, health, age, or zip code.

Chestnut Hill United Church commends Gov. Wolf and his administration for recognizing that the road to a more equitable Pennsylvania leads through the prompt implementation of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

In his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

We must implement RGGI in Pennsylvania as soon as possible in service to Dr. King's recognition of the holy interconnectedness of every one of us.

In other words, here in Pennsylvania, when *one* of us can't breathe, *none* of us should breathe easy until we've done all we can to protect us all.

Thank you.