



Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation

By: Karen Wood, 365 Friday Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15209; kvwood@comcast.net; private citizen, December 10, 2020 public hearing

Good evening. My name is Karen Wood; I appreciate the opportunity to provide my testimony. I have been a resident of Pittsburgh and the surrounding area for twenty years. I am a CPA currently in a senior finance position at a nonprofit in Pittsburgh. I live in Shaler Township in Allegheny County, and I am speaking as a private citizen. I have two grown children who were raised and are still living in the Pittsburgh area.

I am taking this opportunity to urge the state to join the eleven other states in or registered to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI is a sensible and effective way for states to lower their carbon dioxide emissions while providing the funds needed to increase energy efficiency and transition away from fossil fuels. By joining RGGI and reducing our power plant carbon dioxide emissions, we will also reduce the particulate emissions that place Pennsylvania as one of only four states that do not meet current federal standards for particulate matter. (Frazier, 2020) Minor revisions such as monitoring air pollution levels in marginalized communities, setting up a process for engagement with leaders from those communities if pollution levels fail to improve, and prioritizing the investment funds generated by the program for use in those communities should be considered, but no major revisions should be permitted to delay the process. We are already embarrassingly late to the table.

The impacts of Pennsylvania's power plant emissions do not stay within our state's borders. As a contributor of 1% of global carbon dioxide emission, we have a big role to play in helping to stem the increasing harm caused by climate change. (Pennsylvania Environmental Council, 2007) The carbon dioxide emissions of the local coal-fired Cheswick generating station here in Allegheny County are part of the global problem that led to the out-of-control wildfires in the West that claimed the life of one of my friends this summer.

The Cheswick plant is also responsible for particulate emissions that put the health of 1.2 million people here at risk (American Lung Association, 2020). When my older daughter was young, she suffered from asthma. We were fortunate to be able to choose to live some distance from the worst of the air pollution in our county, but she still contracted a rare case of interstitial pneumonia when she was nine years old. I spent a sleepless week at her hospital bedside, quarantined while doctors tested my young child for frightening diseases that could have caused that type of pneumonia, while she was burning up with a high fever and struggling to breathe. It is nearly impossible to directly pinpoint air pollution as a cause of any particular illness. But all those tests came back negative, and the doctors never could explain how my young daughter had developed such a rare illness. There are over 20,000 children like her with asthma in Allegheny County at risk due to particulate emissions. (American Lung Association, 2020)

We know climate change is a problem, causing severe weather and catastrophic fires and flooding across the world, and agricultural losses, flooding, and expansion of vector-borne diseases here in Pennsylvania, according to DEP's own research (Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 2020). We know that fossil fuels are a limited resource, that they are contributing to climate change,

and that burning them causes particulate emissions that frequently exceed recommended standards and cause health problems here in our state. We know that renewables are the energy source of the future; even fossil fuel giants such as BP are starting to move away from fossil fuels and investing in wind and solar power. (McFarlane, 2020) The choice in front of Pennsylvania in this moment is whether to take advantage of a proven program to generate investments in these needed changes, or just keep doing what we've been doing, allowing fossil fuel burning to continue unabated, while climate change impacts become ever more severe and our air quality continues to damage the health of our residents and discourage industries and talent from locating here.

The great thing about RGGI is that it is a win-win environmentally and economically. We don't have to guess or debate about the impacts of joining; as latecomers to the party, we only need to look at how the other states already in the RGGI program have fared. An independent study conducted by the Analysis Group, a global economic consulting firm, found that during the three years 2015-2017, the RGGI program added approximately \$1.4 billion in economic value and led to over 14,500 new job-years for the participant states, without adversely affecting power system reliability. And the investment of auction proceeds into energy efficiency and renewable energy projects successfully mitigated electricity cost impacts. (Hibbard, Tierney, Darling, & Cullinan, 2018)

RGGI is an effective program with a proven track record, that provides a win-win scenario for reducing carbon emissions while adding jobs and economic value. We simply cannot afford not to take this step and move our state forward to a healthier and more economically viable future. Thank you.

References

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