

June 21, 2022

Dr. Kajal B. Kapur, Chair
State Air Pollution Control Board
Members of the Air Pollution Control Board
c/o Office of Regulatory Affairs
Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 1105
Richmond, VA, 23218

RE: RGGI Membership Vital to Virginia's Future

To Members of the Air Pollution Control Board,

We are voters, residents, and concerned constituents representing health, conservation, faith, and housing groups in Virginia. Many of us have dedicated our lives to securing Virginians' health and well-being and the viability of Virginia's economic prosperity for future generations.

We understand the Board will be asked to unlawfully repeal regulations associated with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Focused solely on the merits of the program, [with its proven benefits to Virginia's citizens and our economy](#), we call on the Board to maintain Virginia's steadfast participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Virginia is taking part in a time-tested, market-based program for reducing carbon pollution from our region's electricity sector in a manner that protects all Virginians.

The RGGI consortium of 11 states has achieved significant climate progress and economic gains. Since RGGI began in 2009, hundreds of millions of dollars have been generated and reinvested in local communities while carbon emissions dropped by 50%. RGGI has been working for other states for years, reducing utility reliance on fossil fuels, which insulates customers from rising fuel costs. It has also improved public health by reducing premature deaths and respiratory illnesses, and saving approximately \$5.7 billion in health care costs.

Virginians are already gaining significant economic, health, climate, and other benefits as a result of our participation in RGGI:

- **Improving public health:** RGGI is good for Virginians' health. Reduced fossil fuel burning means less air pollution, which worsens [asthma and other respiratory diseases](#), particularly among children and the elderly. Cleaner air will help deliver up to \$34 million a year in health benefits for Virginians as a result.
- **Investing in the community:** The latest RGGI auction of carbon credits raised more than \$74 million for the Commonwealth, adding to the overall total proceeds of more than \$301 million to date, funds which are already being reinvested into our communities.
- **Economic development:** RGGI will bring clean jobs and economic investment in Virginia. An estimated 45,000 new jobs have been created in RGGI states and \$4.3 billion in economic value added to local economies since it began.
- **Lowering electricity bills:** RGGI reduces Virginians' electricity burden by focusing on energy efficiency. Virginia faces some of the highest electricity bills in the south, but

RGGI funds dedicated to energy-efficiency upgrades are helping Virginians save money on their energy bills.

- **Benefiting all Virginians:** More than 60 percent of RGGI funds go to low-wealth communities and families in Virginia who are disproportionately burdened by flooding and substandard housing in the Commonwealth. But all Virginians will benefit: [A 2018 study](#) found that RGGI-funded energy efficiency programs can lower bills of all residents, not just those who accept energy efficiency improvements, for a total savings of approximately \$725 million.
- **Projects underway:** With RGGI funding, more than 2,300 highly-efficient affordable housing units are now under construction, and 49 grants have already been extended to localities statewide to [tackle recurrent flooding](#).
- **Reducing air pollution:** In just its first year, RGGI helped the Commonwealth cut pollution from coal and gas plants by over 13%, improving our air quality and reducing our dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- **Protecting families from sea level rise:** RGGI is helping Virginia's coastline and neighboring communities, funding protections against sea-level rise. RGGI investments are expected to help avert \$5 billion in sea-level rise damages along the coast.

We commend your dedication and persistence in service to all Virginians who look to the Board for guidance and perseverance in safeguarding our air quality and tackling the climate challenge. Virginia's economy is strong, it is diverse, and it has embraced the opportunities that being a member of RGGI introduced since it was adopted by the Commonwealth in 2020 and implemented in 2021. A bipartisan [two-thirds of Virginia voters support RGGI](#)'s climate, energy, and economy-focused initiatives.

RGGI is an essential tool that enables the Commonwealth to boost our economy while prioritizing environmental justice and supporting vulnerable and under-resourced communities. RGGI is helping to spur state growth and progress toward a clean energy economy that puts Virginia ahead of other neighboring states. RGGI's policy outcomes are improving the air, water, and local resources that power much of Virginia's economy.

Remaining a member of RGGI is an important milestone for Virginia and we thank you for your leadership. We look forward to Virginia's continued movement toward a low-carbon future.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Association of Energy Conservation Professionals
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Fairfax
Clean Virginia
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley
Climate Cabinet
EcoAction Arlington
Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Generation180

Local Energy Alliance Program
National Resources Defense Council
Piedmont Housing Alliance
Sierra Club, Virginia Chapter
Southern Environmental Law Center
Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia Clean Cities Coalition
Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Virginia Organizing
Wetlands Watch