

I would like to share the public comments I delivered on behalf of the Maryland Environmental Health Network at the public meeting the Maryland Department of the Environment held on RGGI last week.

Thank you,
Rebecca Rehr



September 1, 2016

Good evening, my name is Rebecca Rehr and I am the Public Health Advocacy Coordinator at the Maryland Environmental Health Network. We seek better human health protections from environmental pollution and exposure to toxic chemicals. Our vision is a Maryland where children and adults enjoy clean food, air, and water, and benefit from safe environments in homes, schools, and communities.

First of all, thank you for having this public comment meeting outside normal business hours. At previous meetings, we have made several comments about the importance of holding meetings at times when the public can attend, so this platform is great, and will hopefully allow more people to have their voices heard.

In addition to increased participation in the process, environmental justice should be a tenet in the implementation of RGGI funds. It is important that everyone (including renters) should have access to energy efficiency benefits. As Maryland considers allocation of funding to energy efficiency programs, which we strongly encourage, we hope that MDE and the PSC, with private and non-profit partners, will work to make these programs more widely accessible to everyone in our community, including low income working people who often pay disproportionately high energy bills.

Second, we are here to urge Maryland to secure continued emission reductions in the electric sector through the 2016 RGGI Program Review by securing a regional cap on carbon emissions from power plants that declines by 5% annually from 2020 – 2030.

And finally, when calculating overall benefits accrued from RGGI, please take into account health benefits, including health cost savings. As carbon pollution decreases, so do co-pollutants like nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, which are major health threats. As we see fewer asthma hospitalizations from air pollution, we should monetize these benefits and calculate those health cost savings to have a holistic picture of the economics informing overall decision-making processes.

Thank you.