August 12, 2016

Secretary Benjamin Grumbles
Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21230
Email: Ben.Grumbles@maryland.gov

Chairman Kevin Hughes
Maryland Public Service Commission
6 St. Paul St., 16th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
Email: Kevin.Hughes@maryland.gov

Dear Secretary Grumbles and Chairman Hughes,

The undersigned legislators thank you for your support and technical expertise during the 2016 legislative session that helped lead to the adoption of the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA). With the adoption of this law, we call on you to utilize the highly successful Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to keep Maryland on a path to achieving its 2030 greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction requirements. The new GGRA requires Maryland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40% from 2006 levels by 2030. The ongoing RGGI program review, presents a vital opportunity to lock in the necessary emission reductions from the electric sector to ensure that Maryland meets its new GGRA goals while also holding neighboring states accountable for their own emission reduction commitments.

Climate change is the defining environmental challenge and opportunity facing not only Maryland, but our country and the entire world. As the Maryland Commission on Climate Change observed, “Climate change is real, harmful and predominantly human-caused and it is placing the health and well-being of many Marylanders at risk.”[1] Efforts to address climate change provide substantial economic opportunity and human health co-benefits through reduced air and water pollution, while failure to act jeopardizes billions of dollars in the State’s economy.[2]

The RGGI program is tailor-made to lock in the necessary electric sector reductions to ensure attainment of Maryland’s 2030 climate goals. RGGI is an effective program that utilizes market forces to reduce emissions at lowest cost. RGGI’s flexible approach enables private companies to make investment decisions about how and when to reduce emissions, and the program has produced impressive results over its seven years of operation.
A recent analysis evaluating a least-cost buildout to a RGGI-wide 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 concluded that this target was not only achievable, but could be implemented with enormous net benefits to the region. Reduced climate, air, and water pollution will mitigate risks to human health, while a least-cost movement to a 40% reduction in economy-wide carbon emissions will continue to promote economic growth and jobs. The revenue-generating structure of RGGI also presents the opportunity here in Maryland to help ensure that actions to reduce climate pollution and the benefits associated with those actions are equitably distributed across our population.

Over the next decade and a half the RGGI states have the opportunity to advance ongoing efforts to put 10 million electric vehicles on the road, increase energy efficiency to levels of the top-achieving states in the region like Maryland, replace inefficient heating oil in buildings with highly efficient heat pumps and ramp up renewable generation in the region. Due to its current carbon intensity and the opportunity of clean technology, the electric sector will be responsible for nearly half of the incremental emission reductions between now and 2030. As a result of these investments, the RGGI states would achieve $25.7 billion in total savings while adding an average of 58,400 job-years per year. Maryland would see declining carbon emissions from across sectors while adding thousands of jobs in-state, and saving billions of dollars.

As the 2016 RGGI Program Review unfolds, we encourage you, as our state’s representatives to the RGGI Board, to build on the program’s proven success. Our state cannot miss this chance to align our climate programs; we will not see this opportunity again in RGGI for many years. Toward this end, we support the modeling and evaluation of a diverse range of emissions caps, including a cap that aligns with our state’s new 40% by 2030 climate goal. This includes, but is not limited to, a scenario that evaluates a 5% annual emissions decline from 2020 to 2030, which is consistent with previous emission reduction trends in the region. Ultimately, upon consideration of the various scenarios, we urge the state to adopt a cap that best aligns with our new 2030 state GGRA goal.

Sincerely,

Maryland State Senators (alphabetical)

Brian Feldman
District 15
Member
Finance Committee

Maryland State Delegates (alphabetical)

Kumar Barve
District 17
Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee

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Chair  
Executive Nominations Committee

Maggie McIntosh  
District 43  
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Appropriations Committee

Jim Rosapepe  
District 21  
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Aruna Miller  
District 15  
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Kirill Reznik  
District 39  
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Shane Robinson  
District 39  
Member

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