



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

Testimony In Opposition of HB 66
Environment - Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative - Withdrawal
(Restoring Energy Freedom Act)
Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
February 10, 2026

Delegate Chrisholm and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Public Health Association does not support HB66: Environment – Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative – Withdrawal (Restoring Energy Freedom Act). From a public health perspective, this bill will incur preventable illnesses and potential deaths upon the greater Maryland population. We urge the delegates and committee to reconsider this bill.

Negative Health Outcomes

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) is a landmark market-based program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This mission to limit greenhouse gases has considerable positive impact on the environment and human health as well. Emissions have air pollutants, such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOC), and direct particulate matter 2.5 (PM_{2.5}).¹ These air pollutants can have negative effects on the health of Maryland citizens. PM_{2.5} is classified as fine, inhalable particles that have a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or smaller. PM_{2.5} has been linked to causing a range of negative health effects, impacting the respiratory, immune, cardiovascular, and even nervous systems.² A comprehensive meta-analysis concluded that exposure to PM_{2.5} increases average risk for death by respiratory disease by 30%. Furthermore, the same study concluded that exposure to PM_{2.5} increases average risk for death by cardiovascular disease by 10%.³ Considering greenhouse gas emissions' negative impact on health, withdrawing from RGGI would be putting Maryland citizens at greater risk for largely preventable diseases.

Positive Impact of RGGI

Studies have shown and quantified the positive impact that RGGI has had on public health. An analysis by ABT associates reveals that the improvement in air quality from RGGI has resulted in avoiding hundreds of premature deaths from 2009-2014. Furthermore, the economic value of RGGI through public health and productivity benefits is estimated to have saved a cumulative 5.7 billion dollars.⁴

¹ EPA. (2018, July 31). Air Quality - National Summary | US EPA. US EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-national-summary>

² Sangkham, S., Phairuang, W., Sherchan, S. P., Pansakun, N., Munkong, N., Samdhong, K., ... & Sakunkoo, P. (2024). An update on adverse health effects from exposure to PM_{2.5}. *Environmental Advances*, 100603.

³ Juanmei Guo et al., “Long-Term Exposure to Particulate Matter on Cardiovascular and Respiratory Diseases in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *Frontiers in Public Health* 11 (March 2023): 1134341, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1134341>.

⁴ “Analysis Public Health Report,” RGGI Project Series, accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.rggiprojectseries.org/public-health-analysis-report>.

Disproportionate Harm to Vulnerable Communities

RGGI also plays an important role in protecting and investing in the health of those in vulnerable communities. In Maryland specifically, funds from RGGI are channelled in Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF), which supports direct bill assistance and clean and renewable energy projects.⁵ This will help reduce household expenses to increase indoor air quality, allowing homes of lower socioeconomic status to increase their air quality. Withdrawal from RGGI would put the individuals in these homes at greater risk for respiratory diseases.

We urge you to reconsider your position on the withdrawal from Maryland from RGGI. This decision would be the health of the citizens of Maryland at risk.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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⁵Investments of Proceeds | RGGI, Inc. [www.rggi.org. https://www.rggi.org/investments/proceeds-investments.](https://www.rggi.org/investments/proceeds-investments)