



MASSACHUSETTS
INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT

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February 17, 2017

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The Honorable Charles Baker, Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The State House
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light is a non-profit organization that provides a faith-based response to climate change by promoting conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy and policies that will lead to a sustainable future. We have more than 245 faith community members in more than 100 cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

I am writing because we are at a critical point in history at which the decisions we make in response to the climate change crisis are vitally important to the health of creation and the citizens of the Commonwealth.

As you are well aware, Massachusetts and its neighbors have been leaders in the fight to mitigate climate change by creating and implementing the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). This program has been an unqualified success in both reducing the harmful emissions of carbon dioxide from power generation *and* simultaneously growing our economy by investing in new clean energy technologies. RGGI has resulted in \$3 billion in economic benefit to its participating states while also creating over 30,000 job years – good, well-paying jobs in the new clean energy economy. At the same time CO₂ emissions from power plants have been reduced by more than 45 percent. The Acadia Center's July 2016 report *Measuring Success* shows that states in RGGI have experienced 3.6% more economic growth than states that have yet to act on climate, even as emissions have declined 16% more in RGGI states than in other states.

The most recent RGGI auction shows that the drop in auction prices – down 53 percent from their levels of one year ago – will mean less investment in clean energy. Because Massachusetts law dictates that no less than 80 percent of the state's proceeds from RGGI carbon auctions be reinvested in its energy efficiency programs, a reduction in RGGI investments will threaten the Commonwealth's position as a leader in energy efficiency policy. Clearly we must lower the cap on CO₂ emissions during the next RGGI program period enough to ensure its continued success.

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We urge you to strongly support strengthening the cap on carbon dioxide emissions by lowering it by 5% per year of current emissions. We also call on you to work with your fellow RGGI governors to make those progressive reductions a reality in the next RGGI program cycle; and to support a retirement of excess credits that are being banked by power generators and which undermine future program success.

Put another way, maintaining a RGGI cap reduction of 2.5 percent a year of annual emissions will fail to allow states to adequately address carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. Given the current political climate in Washington, it is incumbent upon states to take strong action to reduce power plant emissions.

Cap-and-trade programs like RGGI – employed by northeastern states to so effectively reduce environmental pollutants – provide a sound economic method for addressing the most crucial environmental challenge we have ever faced. Climate change carries with it a profound moral imperative to protect the most vulnerable in our society who disproportionately suffer from its effects. Right here in Massachusetts, the poor, the young the elderly and the disadvantaged are suffering with childhood asthma and other health-related maladies that are caused by power plant emissions.

Reducing our reliance on dirty fossil fuels not only benefits Massachusetts' citizens and our economy, but it provides an example for others that caring for creation is an essential part of loving our neighbors, including the least, the lost and those without a voice.

Sincerely,



Vince Maraventano
Executive Director

cc: Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Martin Suuberg, Esq., Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection
The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Stanley C. Rosenberg, President of the Senate
The Honorable Frank Smizik, Chair, House Comm. on Global Warming & Climate Change