



February 28, 2023

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

As state legislators, we see firsthand the devastating impacts of climate change and pollution on our communities, from the enormous costs associated with stormwater damage and severe weather incidents, to the displacement of families and businesses whose homes or storefronts are destroyed by flooding, to the serious public health consequences arising from polluted air and water.

We particularly see these impacts in marginalized rural and urban communities, which have been disproportionately affected by the economic and environmental fallout of Pennsylvania's long history of extractive industry. The Norfolk Southern rail crash in East Palestine, Ohio, just over the Pennsylvania border, serves as yet another sobering reminder of the need for policies, regulations, and labor laws that protect our workers, our communities, and the shared natural resources of our Commonwealth—not the profits of multi-billion-dollar, union-busting corporations.

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Legislative Climate Caucus and in preparation for the 2023-2024 legislative budget season, we write to request that Pennsylvania make meaningful investments in climate action that will help to address and mitigate the future impacts of climate change on our communities and advance the causes of environmental, economic, and educational justice in our commonwealth.

With a *new administration and a new majority* in the House of Representatives, we are optimistic that now is the time to build on the environmental work of the previous administration and take bold steps toward solving some of our most pressing issues.

- We advocate for the **restoration of full and adequate funding to the Department of Environmental Protection** to ensure that the Department can uphold its mission of protecting Pennsylvania's air, land, and water from pollution and providing for the health and safety of its citizens.

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Senator Carolyn Comitta
Rep. Danielle Friel Otten

Vice Chairs

Senator Art Haywood
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Secretaries

Senator Amanda Cappelletti
Rep. Paul Takac



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- We seek a **sustainable, long-term dedicated funding source for special environmental funds**, which are too often the first monies to be traded away in budget negotiations.

These funds are essential to our conservation efforts, watershed restoration and protection, and the elimination of environmental hazards and pollution sources such as abandoned mines and oil and gas wells. Our local municipalities rely on grant awards from these funds to address the environmental needs that most directly impact their residents.

- We urge the administration to convene a **working group on the RGGI Investments Act** to ensure that RGGI funds are appropriated to equitable and intentional investments in reducing air pollution and to build shared prosperity for the areas of Pennsylvania most in need of investment: environmental justice communities and the workers, communities, and regions affected by impacts of our energy transitions.
- One of the most successful, bipartisan legislative initiatives in the General Assembly's 2021-2022 session was the passage of the **Whole Home Repairs Program**, which dedicated a \$125 million state investment to fight blight, improve safety, and increase energy efficiency to improving housing for our communities.

We know that \$125 million is just a start to addressing this need, and we seek to build on this investment by dedicating funds to maintain this effort and keep Pennsylvania's housing stock safe and affordable and our clean energy transition accessible to all Pennsylvanians.

- On the heels of the historic Commonwealth Court Ruling declaring Pennsylvania's public school funding system unconstitutional, we are working with the Pennsylvania Blue-Green Caucus to advocate for **investments in the work to repair, restore, and prepare our public school infrastructure for the future**, particularly in the most traditionally marginalized communities following decades of disinvestment.

It is our constitutional duty to end the blight of toxic schools across the commonwealth, which have exposed children to toxins that interrupt healthy development and subjected teachers, administrators, and staff to working in environments where cancer-causing materials fall from the ceilings and chip away from the walls of underfunded schools. It is our hope to partner with your administration to make meaningful investments in the health, safety, energy efficiency, and clean energy transition of our public school infrastructure across Pennsylvania.



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- Recent ice storms in Texas, extreme weather events across the nation, and extreme cold temperatures in Pennsylvania underscore the need for investments that will **increase resiliency and emergency energy storage capacity in our communities, boost our energy independence, and reduce our reliance on outdated power grids dominated by a concentration of fossil fuel interests.**

We ask for your support of solutions such as **Solar for Schools**, which would both advance our clean energy goals and allow neighborhood schools to maintain reliable power and serve as emergency shelters in extreme weather events, and electrification of larger scale vehicles in municipal fleets, such as fire engines, trash trucks, and school buses, which would both reduce emissions and allow these vehicles to be used as emergency energy storage.

- We stand with the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus in their work to **empower environmental justice communities** by codifying, funding, and empowering the Office of Environmental Justice and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board and requiring state agencies to consider the cumulative impacts to communities when considering permit applications.
- We support the **expansion of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS) Tier I requirement from 8% to 30% by 2030, and the adoption of a Clean Energy Standard that will commit Pennsylvania to net-zero by 2050.**

Good climate policy is good economic and social policy, and a commitment to climate policies and practices that protect our environment, our citizens, and our future generations will help to build vibrant communities supported by good, family-sustaining jobs for our workforce.

- We are grateful for your work as Attorney General to convene the 43rd Statewide Investigating Grand Jury investigation into the unconventional oil and gas industry, and we ask for **your support of our ongoing work to finally bring the Grand Jury's eight legislative recommendations** to fruition.

We are encouraged by President Biden's historic investments in climate action in 2022, and we believe that Pennsylvania has both the opportunity and the responsibility to step up as a leader in climate policy and help to create a more equitable and sustainable roadmap for our nation.

We ask for your support of the above-named priorities, and we look forward to working with you and your administration toward the goal of building a stronger, more resilient, more equitable,



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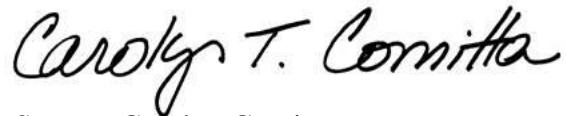
and more sustainable Commonwealth that centers the needs of our most vulnerable citizens and seeks to correct our history of racial and economic inequality.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

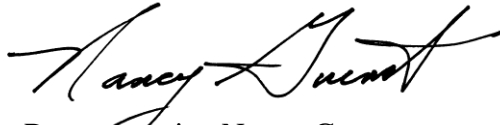
Sincerely,



Representative Danielle Friel Otten
House Climate Caucus Chair



Senator Carolyn Comitta
Senate Climate Caucus Chair



Representative Nancy Guent
House Climate Caucus Vice Chair



Senator Art Haywood
Senate Climate Caucus Vice Chair



Representative Paul Takac
House Climate Caucus Secretary



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The Pennsylvania Legislative Climate Caucus convenes to research, evaluate, discuss, and raise awareness about legislation, appropriations and related matters in ways that affirm evidence-based, peer-reviewed science, the acceptance that climate change is real and human-made, the importance of environmental justice, and the necessity for a renewable energy future. Further, the Climate Caucus operates to uphold the charge of environmental stewardship as laid bare in Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution.

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