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June 7, 2021

VIA E-MAIL

To: The Honorable Governor Roy Cooper
North Carolina Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Re: Support for Adoption of Rule to Set Enforceable Limits and Reduce Carbon Pollution, and Join The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

Dear Governor Cooper,

We write to urge your administration to continue the common-sense approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions that you launched with Executive Order 80, by setting a declining limit on power sector carbon pollution and joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. On January 11, 2021, the Southern Environmental Law Center filed a petition with the Environmental Management Commission, on behalf of Clean Air Carolina and the North Carolina Coastal Federation, asking the Commission to adopt rules setting a declining budget for carbon dioxide emissions from the electric power sector that is consistent with the Clean Energy Plan's targeted 70% reduction from 2005 levels by 2030. The groups' petition would also have North Carolina participate in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a regional market for power-sector carbon dioxide emissions allowances. Our organizations strongly support the pending petition.

We commend you for your leadership in confronting the threats that climate change poses to our state by bringing North Carolina into the U.S. Climate Alliance and issuing Executive Order No. 80. After a robust stakeholder process produced the Clean Energy Plan in 2019, and after academia worked with stakeholders for more than a year developing a report on major carbon-reduction policies as envisioned in the plan's Recommendation A-1, it is time to follow through and turn the report into action. North Carolina must act now to reduce carbon pollution if we hope to achieve the Clean Energy Plan's 2030 target. The petition offers a proven approach that is available now. Every month we delay is another month lost in the race to reduce emissions and secure a brighter future for North Carolinians.

The carbon-reduction program proposed in the petition promises to be effective and low-cost. The “Recommendation A-1” report prepared by Duke University and the University of North Carolina, in consultation with stakeholders, evaluated a policy option that is nearly identical to the program proposed in the petition. The “A-1” report shows that this program would cause nearly immediate and dramatic reductions in power sector carbon pollution. At the same time, the program would be highly cost-effective, and depending on how it is structured, could even reduce residential electric bills and support energy efficiency measures. Based on these results, we are confident that joining RGGI is the right choice for North Carolina. While some details of the policy’s structure will be determined in the coming months, the undersigned organizations are committed to ensuring that fenceline communities are not disproportionately burdened and that the program’s revenue is invested in ways that produce equitable and just outcomes. To that end, we will continue to advocate for provisions in the regulatory framework that increase public input and equitably manage impacts to fenceline communities, communities of color, and low to moderate income communities.

Successfully addressing climate change will protect North Carolinians from some of the most harmful health impacts associated with extreme heat, and more severe hurricanes and flooding. RGGI will have both near-term and far-term health benefits. By reducing greenhouse gases, RGGI will help slow climate change over the long term. RGGI will also have immediately realized health benefits and health cost savings by reducing co-pollutants emitted during the burning of fossil fuels. [Analysis](#) has shown that existing RGGI states have seen between 300 to 830 lives saved, more than 8,200 asthma attacks avoided, 39,000 lost work days averted, and \$5.7 billion in health savings and other benefits. The A-1 report states that by 2030, joining RGGI would significantly cut Nitrous Oxide (NOx) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO2) emissions, resulting in health benefits to North Carolinians, especially children because of reductions in childhood asthma, preterm births, and classes of low birth weight and autism spectrum disorder.

We would be pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you or your staff regarding the opportunity presented by the petition now pending before the Commission, and we look forward to working with you on North Carolina’s transition to a clean energy future.

Respectfully,

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