

Statement – Philadelphia Office of Sustainability

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Ben Schneider

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Good evening – thank you all for giving me a few minutes to speak tonight. My name is Ben Schneider and I am here both as a representative of Environmental Defense Fund and a resident of the city of Philadelphia.

On behalf of myself, EDF's more than 91,000 members in Pennsylvania, and our more than 2 million members across the globe, I want to thank the Office of Sustainability, Councilwoman Reynolds-Brown, and your partners for holding this important public hearing about the Clean Power Plan. I'm an environmentalist by trade, but I'm also about to be a father for the first time in a few months. I'm all too aware of the hazards posed by air pollution to our communities here and around the country; the changing climate and the consequences we're already starting to see from that. It is of the utmost importance we maintain our essential environmental safeguards – particularly for children, the elderly, and all of those who are most vulnerable to air pollution's most dangerous effects.

If only all of our elected and appointed federal leaders shared this view. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is repealing our nation's first ever limits on carbon pollution – the pollution most responsible for climate change – from power plants. And they have offered limited opportunities for the public to engage. That's why I'm grateful that our leaders in Philadelphia have stepped up to ensure our voices are heard.

I am here tonight to support the Clean Power Plan because if it stays in place, it will yield profound public health and environmental benefits for families and communities in all parts of the country, including right here in Pennsylvania, and improve the lives of millions of Americans.

EPA's proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan would harm communities that are in the shadow of or downwind of high polluting power plants, costing thousands of American lives and increasing the risk of asthma attacks, heart attacks, and other harmful health impacts for some of the most vulnerable Americans. EPA itself recognizes in the proposed rule that repealing the Clean Power Plan could lead to as many as 4,500 additional deaths from air pollution each year, as well as 90,000 additional childhood asthma attacks and hundreds of thousands of lost school and work days. A recent [study](#) showed that Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia would see some of the largest health benefits from protections such as the Clean Power Plan – and would be most harmed by repeal.

As a city we need better protections. According to the American Lung Association, Philadelphia ranks among the 25 worst cities for ozone pollution, as well as both short term and year-round particulate matter pollution.

But the Clean Power Plan isn't just about essential environmental protections – it helps drive job creation in one of America's fastest growing economic sectors – clean energy. The US clean energy sector is already much bigger than many realize – it's a \$200 billion industry employing more than 3 million Americans. But repealing the Clean Power Plan would threaten these opportunities.

Pennsylvania would do well to remember the benefits the clean energy economy has right here in our state. With our more than [70,000 clean energy jobs](#), 62,000 efficiency jobs, and opportunities for much more, Pennsylvania is well positioned to lead in reducing carbon pollution from the power sector.

At the end of the day, this isn't about numbers or stats. It doesn't look that way to me, anyway. This is about people, like me, like you, like all of us, who are now facing the very real prospect that basic environmental protections we need to keep our families safe are on the chopping block. I worry about asthma attacks here in Philly, and I worry about them getting worse. I worry about climate change – I know that we need our leaders – in Washington, in Harrisburg, here in Philly, everywhere – to act now if we're going to protect the world we leave our children.

I know I'm going to keep doing everything I can to help my son, and everyone's children, get the safe air to breathe that they deserve. And I'm confident you'll do the same. For that, thank you for holding this important event, and for your continued leadership in the fight against climate change.