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Green Groups to Legislators: Fix or Ditch New Energy Bill *Flawed Carbon Capture & Sequestration Language Poses Environmental & Economic Risks*

King of Prussia, PA—Four of Pennsylvania’s largest environmental groups stepped up their opposition today to proposed new state-level energy legislation, calling on the bill’s supporters to either fix flawed language dealing with carbon capture and sequestration, or scrap the bill completely.

The new proposed legislation (House Bill 80 and Senate Bill 92) would require Pennsylvania to generate 3 percent of its electricity from power plants equipped with carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technology, and was the focus of a hearing held today by a state House Appropriations subcommittee. The groups acknowledged that CCS merits support, but PennEnvironment, Sierra Club’s Pennsylvania Chapter, Clean Air Council and Clean Water Action pointed to several critical flaws in how the legislation is written which pose both environmental and economic risks.

“Carbon capture and sequestration *could* play a key role in solving global warming, but this technology should be advanced in a way that protects our environment and our economy. Unfortunately, this bill fails in both areas,” said Nathan Willcox, Energy & Clean Air Advocate with PennEnvironment.

“This bill requires the Commonwealth to assume all liability for geologic carbon storage, including environmental and private property damage, as well as fatalities, in the event of a facility failure,” said Jeff Schmidt, Director of the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter. “Given the scientific uncertainties of geological sequestration, and the inadequate length of time provided for full site characterization, these liability provisions represent an unacceptable threat to Pennsylvania and its citizens.”

“The legislation proposes that Pennsylvania assume liability for any problems associated with this unproven technology. That is a raw deal for Pennsylvania taxpayers,” said Joseph Otis Minott, Executive Director of the Clean Air Council. “If taxpayers are going to subsidize energy projects, let’s make it for wind and solar energy.”

“This bill has some huge loopholes for coal companies. We need to fix this bill so we don’t promote more coal plants in Pennsylvania that continue using the same dirty technology,” said Myron Arnowitt, Pennsylvania State Director for Clean Water Action.

The goal of CCS—the capture and permanent storage of global warming pollution to prevent such pollution from escaping into the atmosphere and contributing to the

warming of the planet—is something that the environmental community supports. Coal-fired power plants are the largest source of global warming pollution in Pennsylvania and nationwide.

But beyond concerns about *mandating* electricity generation from CCS-equipped power plants before any such facilities even exist in commercial form anywhere in the world, the groups pointed to two critical loopholes in the language of HB 80 and SB 92:

- In the event that a viable sequestration network is not developed, coal-fired power plants that installed carbon capture technology would still receive credit under the state’s Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (AEPS). In other words, plants could be receiving credit for capturing and sequestering their pollution—without actually sequestering their pollution. In the worst case scenario, this could incentivize the construction of new coal-fired power plants under the AEPS that don’t actually sequester their global warming pollution. Every new coal plant that doesn’t sequester its global warming pollution creates new pollution equivalent to adding hundreds of thousands of new cars to the road.
- Rather than requiring that the utilities and electric generation facilities that created the global warming pollution pay for its clean up, the state and likely ratepayers would be saddled with many of the set-up and liability costs for carbon capture technologies and the sequestration network. No one is sure how much liability for sequestration sites will cost, and without protection for ratepayers, sharp increases in electricity rates could occur. Studies out of MIT and the Western Governors Association found that CCS could increase the costs of electricity from coal by over 60 percent.

The four groups joined with Natural Resources Defense Council in drafting and submitting proposed amendment language to the bill’s sponsors (Rep. Greg Vitali, Rep. Chris Ross, Sen. Ted Erickson), but have yet to see their core recommendations incorporated into the language. Moving forward, the groups pledged to begin educating and mobilizing citizens across Pennsylvania on the issue.

“No one is saying that utilities and the government should abandon research on CCS technologies,” said Willcox. “But to *require* CCS in a manner that could incentivize new coal plants that don’t sequester their pollution—while leaving ratepayers and the state to foot much of the bill—is a dangerously misguided proposal.”

The groups did continue to praise the legislation’s call for an increase in the clean Tier 1 of Pennsylvania’s AEPS, as well as an increase in the ‘carve-out’ specifically for solar power. The legislation would require that 20 percent of the state’s electricity come from cleaner sources including wind and solar power by 2026. The current Tier 1 standard for these resources stands at 8 percent.

Finally, the groups pointed out that several studies have documented how we can cut pollution to the levels scientists say are necessary to avoid the worst consequences of global warming, *without* the use of CCS technology. Just yesterday, Greenpeace and the European Renewable Energy Council released a report that shows how the United States

can cut global warming pollution from current levels by 85 percent by 2050 without carbon capture and sequestration—and do it at half the cost and with twice the job creation of what it would take to achieve these reductions with carbon capture and sequestration, nuclear power and other non-renewable energy sources.

PennEnvironment is a citizen-based environmental advocacy organization with roughly 15,000 citizen members across Pennsylvania. More information can be found at www.PennEnvironment.org

Sierra Club is a grassroots environmental organization, formed in 1892, with approximately 27,000 members in Pennsylvania. More information can be found at www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org

Clean Air Council is a membership-based environmental organization with over 8,000 members in Pennsylvania. More information on the Council can be found at www.cleanair.org

Clean Water Action is an environmental organization with over 100,000 members in Pennsylvania. Clean Water Action works to empower residents to take action to protect our waters, build healthy communities, and make democracy work for all of us. More information can be found at www.cleanwateraction.org/pa