

February 14, 2024

The Honorable Josh Shapiro  
State Capitol  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**RE: Pennsylvania Needs a Sustainable, Inclusive Economic Development Plan**

Dear Governor Shapiro,

We, the undersigned non-profit organizations, businesses, local government officials, and community groups, write to express our concerns with your recently announced statewide initiative: *Pennsylvania Gets It Done: A Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania*. In short, we urge you to prioritize sustainable industries, particularly the rapidly growing renewable energy, battery storage, electric vehicle, and energy efficiency sectors.

We agree the Commonwealth needs a long-term economic development strategy. While we respect your efforts in this significant undertaking, the proposed plan will worsen Pennsylvania's economic position by linking it to the fossil fuel-driven boom-and-bust economic cycles of the past. Instead, we urge you to return to your campaign platform of forging a new path towards a clean and sustainable economy that supports workers and protects the climate.

Pennsylvania is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions in the nation. Consequently, the state looms near the bottom for growth in sustainable industries, even as we watch neighboring states begin to transition to renewable energy development, including those that have historically relied on fossil fuel industries. **This economic development strategy is one of the most consequential environmental decisions your administration will make during your tenure as Governor—and we want to work with you to get it right.**

**Economic Development Policy *is* Environmental Policy**

The economy shapes and reshapes the physical landscape of our communities—from main streets to country roads, factories to coal mines. We experience it through our senses—it is possible to see, hear, and smell the impacts of economic development—and through our physical health, especially when done carelessly.

That is why, after generations of lived experience with extractive industries, Pennsylvania amended its constitution to include an Environmental Rights Amendment, Article 1, Section 27, which states that “*the people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment.*”

In fact, the *Gets It Done* plan rightfully cites the “complex environmental legacy” of past economic decisions, but it doesn’t fully act on those lessons learned beyond a nod to brownfield site development. We must continue to learn from what history taught us—short-sighted economic development decisions can and will impact these fundamental rights. We must act accordingly.

### **Economic Development Policy Must be Equitable from the Ground Up**

This plan correctly calls for an *equitable* energy transition, yet it omits strategic players that are necessary to support such a transition. Specifically, the agencies dedicated to protecting and preserving the health of the environment for all Pennsylvanians were excluded in its development according to the list of advising agencies, namely: the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and the DEP Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ). Additionally, community-focused and sustainable business trade organizations are not included or referenced in this plan. We maintain that if the plan is designed to benefit communities, then the inclusion of vital state agencies and organizations focused on sustainability is necessary to support the goal of equity. It is clear that the development of this plan did not include meaningful engagement with environmental justice communities because the priorities will continue to perpetuate environmental injustices.

### **The Plan Proposes a Fossil Fuels-First All-of-the-Above Energy Strategy**

The *Gets It Done* plan explicitly states it is using an “all-of-the-above-energy strategy” to build the Commonwealth’s energy sector, but it falls short in two ways.

First, it doesn’t present a plan to grow our renewable energy industry. In fact, it only mentions solar, wind, or renewable energy three times in the entire 44-page plan, either as an extension of doing something else, like building transmission lines to bring renewable energy generation *into the state from projects outside our borders*, or taking advantage of federal infrastructure investments in renewable energy. The implication is that renewables are an afterthought and are only in the mix if there are federal incentives to do so or another state builds it.

Second, while there are passing mentions of nuclear energy and hydropower, fossil fuels are the dominant energy technology prioritized by the plan—industries that have failed to deliver

long-term financial growth<sup>1</sup> and are detrimental to Pennsylvania's health and environment.<sup>2</sup> The plan emphasizes our existing dependence on fracked gas production, while highlighting the infrastructure needed to support extractive industries, such as pipelines, or manufacturing, such as coal and hydrogen.

### **The Plan Doesn't 'Move at the Speed of Climate Change'**

Notably, this plan does not provide a roadmap to reach the administration's own climate goals of 30% renewables by 2030 (30X30) and net zero by 2050. In fact, the plan's few mentions of carbon pollution couch its goal as the undefined and problematic "low-carbon economic growth." This term both contradicts your stated goal to achieve net-zero carbon pollution by 2050 as well as promotes the false narrative that Pennsylvania can continue its dependence on fossil fuels without economic or environmental consequences.

Furthermore, it is bewildering that the plan addresses climate change only twice, and even then only indirectly: (1) within the context of building a blue hydrogen industry relying on fracked gas; and (2) within the context of vaguely building electric transmission infrastructure, seemingly to bring renewable energy resources *into* the state (though no plan is presented for actually developing and deploying them in-state). Even then, these strategies are supported only by another vague reference to federal funding.

### **The Modern Sustainable Economy is Passing Pennsylvania By**

Failure to prioritize renewable energy development in its 10-year economic plan puts Pennsylvania in the precarious position of being one of only a few states not capitalizing on the emerging sustainable economy. Other fossil fuel-producing states like West Virginia<sup>3</sup>, Ohio<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Messenger, et al. *Pennsylvania's Bad Bet: Why Shell Didn't Save Appalachia with Plastics*. Ohio River Valley Institute, January 2023,

<https://ohiorivervalleyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Pennsylvanias-Bad-Bet-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> While there are countless studies on the impact of fossil fuels at the community level, a recent example is Wuyue Yu and George Thurston, *An Interrupted Time Series Analysis of the Cardiovascular Health Benefits of a Coal Coking Operation Closure*, Environmental Research Health, July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Patterson, Scott. "Old West Virginia Steel Mill Becomes A Green-Energy Powerhouse. Wall Street Journal. September, 17, 2023.

<https://www.wsj.com/business/entrepreneurship/old-west-virginia-steel-mill-becomes-a-green-energy-powerhouse-2f67ee3c>

<sup>4</sup> Williams, Mark. "Honda, LG Energy hit milestone with EV battery plant in Fayette County." The Columbus Dispatch. June 21, 2023.

<https://www.dispatch.com/story/business/automotive/2023/06/21/first-steel-beam-goes-up-for-ohio-honda-lg-battery-plant-for-evs/70339113007/>

Texas<sup>5</sup>, and Mississippi<sup>6</sup> are adapting and modernizing, quickly diversifying their economies to highlight renewable energy, with great economic success.

For instance, in 2023, Form Energy, a next-gen, utility-scale iron-air battery manufacturer with offices in Eighty Four, Washington County, chose to build a new \$760 million plant at the site of an old abandoned steel mill in Weirton, West Virginia rather than expanding its operations in western Pennsylvania.

The *Gets It Done* plan should have a clear strategy to rectify this problem and attract more sustainable businesses in order for Pennsylvania to become an energy powerhouse of the future. Regrettably, this plan's primary focus on the fossil fuel industry diverts attention and resources away from proactively attracting these businesses and building the renewable energy infrastructure necessary to facilitate their success. For instance, rather than state agencies prioritizing and coordinating plans to attract federal infrastructure dollars for renewable energy, the state has spent the bulk of its time working to attract federal funds for a fossil fuel-based hydrogen project.

We fear that the *Gets It Done* plan is a signal to these sustainable industries that they are not wanted in the Commonwealth and we will continue to fall behind.

## **Conclusion**

We appreciate your proactive approach to Pennsylvania's economic challenges, and we agree with your desire to set forth a clear strategy for economic growth and, most importantly, for building more vibrant communities. Many of the overarching policies aimed at increasing innovation, housing, education, outdoor recreation, workforce training, and site development are strong and much needed.

However, in order to have a thriving economy, Pennsylvania needs an energy sector that supports public health, a clean environment, and a stable climate—characteristics that the fossil fuel sectors prioritized in this economic plan do not support. For this and future generations, we must look forward and not backward. We urge you to reconsider your economic strategy for

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<sup>5</sup> Brangham, William and Hellerman, Caleb. "Texas goes green: How oil country became the renewable energy leader." PBS. December 4, 2023.  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/texas-goes-green-how-oil-country-became-the-renewable-energy-leader>

<sup>6</sup> Pettus, Emily. "Mississippi legislators approve incentives for a factory that would make EV batteries." AP News. January 18, 2024.  
<https://apnews.com/article/mississippi-ev-battery-plant-special-session-45399bd35a6c11fe303fb2a919557cfd>

Pennsylvania's energy sector and work equitably with clean energy businesses and communities to build a sustainable economy we can all prosper in and be proud of.

Sincerely,

PennFuture	Citizens' Climate Lobby - Harrisburg Chapter
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania	Citizens' Climate Lobby - Mercyhurst University Chapter
215 People's Alliance	Clean Air Action Fund
350 Pittsburgh	Clean Air Council
412 Clean Teams LLC	Clean Water Action
412 JUSTICE	Climate Reality, Dauphin County
Action Together NEPA	Climate Reality Project: Susquehanna Valley PA Chapter
Allegheny Cleanways	Communitopia
Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN)	Concerned Residents Of West Deer (CROWD)
American Sustainable Business Council	Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Audubon Mid-Atlantic	Delaware River Greenway Partnership
Back to Earth Compost Crew	Delaware Valley Action!
Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAMC)	Earth Holder Community of Southwestern PA
Benedictines for Peace, Erie PA	Earthworks
Better Path Coalition	East Coventry Advocacy
Berks Gas Truth	Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)
The Black Appalachian Coalition	Energy Efficiency Empowerment
Breathe Project	Energy Coordinating Agency
Bucks Environmental Action	Environmental Health Project
Carnegie Mellon University CREATE Lab	
CASA / CASA in Action	
Center for Coalfield Justice	

Environmental Integrity Project (EIP)	Mountain Watershed Association
Etna Community Organization	National Parks Conservation Association
Erie County United	NEPA Green Coalition (Northeast Pennsylvania Green Coalition)
Envinity	New Sun Rising
Food & Water Watch / Food & Water Action	New Voices for Reproductive Justice
Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds	The Newtown Creek Coalition
Fourth Economy	No False Solutions Pennsylvania
FracTracker Alliance	Ohio Valley Environmental Resistance (OVER)
Generation180	One Pennsylvania
Green Building Alliance	Our Water Our Air Our Rights
Group Against Smog & Pollution (GASP)	Pennsylvania Indivisible
Grounded Strategies	Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Grow Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania Jewish Earth Alliance
Indivisible Bucks County	Pennsylvania Sierra Club, Lake Erie Group
Indivisible Hershey	Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network
Indivisible Philadelphia	Philadelphia Solar Energy Association
Inner City Neighborhood Art House	Philly Thrive
Intertwined Faith Community- Pastor Kevin Long	Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Landforce	Pittsburgh Food Policy Council
Lehigh Valley Stands Up	Pocono Heritage Land Trust
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association	POWER Interfaith
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania	Presque Isle Audubon Society
Make the Road Pennsylvania	Protect Northern PA
Marcellus Outreach Butler	Protect PT (Penn-Trafford)
Move Past Plastic (MPP)	

Quaker Action - Mid Atlantic Region	Three Rivers Waterkeeper
Rail Pollution Protection Pittsburgh (RP3)	Unitarian Universalist Justice PA
RiverWise	UpstreamPgh
Sierra Club, Pennsylvania	UrbanKind Institute
Solar United Neighbors	Valley Forge Audubon Society
Sunrise Movement Philadelphia	Vote Solar
Sunrise Movement Pittsburgh	Waste Not Technologies, LLC
Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia	Wilkes-Barre NAACP
Third Act PA	Women for a Healthy Environment
Thomas Blvd Group	Working for Justice Ministry- St. Paul's United Methodist Church
	Zero Waste Wrangler

**Endorsing Elected Officials:**

Alice Gabriel- Etna Borough Council

Anita Prizio- Allegheny County Council

Beth Jacksier- Mayor, Borough of Bridgeport

Cecilia Ce-Ce Gerlach- Allentown City Council

Dan Grzybek- Allegheny County Council

Erika Strassburger- Pittsburgh City Council

Jim Lee- Commissioner, Springfield Township, Montgomery County

Martin Miller- Commissioner, West Norriton Township, Montgomery County

Megan Tunon- Etna Borough Council

Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis- Allegheny County Council

Moshe Sherman- Edgewood Borough Council

Paul Klein- Allegheny County Council

Tessie McNeely- Supervisor, Lower Gwynedd Township, Montgomery County