



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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## **Fitzgerald Testifies on Climate Change Before Senate Policy Committee**

**PITTSBURGH** – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald today testified before the Senate Democratic Policy Committee at a hearing in Pittsburgh on addressing climate change in Pennsylvania by controlling carbon emissions. That testimony, in its entirety, follows:

*Thank you, Chair Boscola, for convening this important hearing on climate change.*

*Each day, we see climate change affecting our nation, our state and our communities on a more frequent basis. The severe hurricanes hitting our coasts come more often, there are severe forest fires seemingly every time we turn around, and severe storms locally are becoming commonplace, causing flooding, landslides and other adverse impacts to our environment.*

*The recent report on climate change released by the federal government has an important message – that climate change poses a severe threat to our health and to our economy. The report indicates that negative impacts to our nation could reduce the national economy by as much as 10%.*

*In order to impact climate change, and reduce greenhouse gases, we need to focus specifically on reducing the levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and methane emissions in this country.*

*I applaud the recent announcement by Governor Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding methane leaks. The requirement to provide leak detection monitoring, and enforcement actions at all new production sites, compressor stations, and pipelines will have positive results.*

*I am disappointed to see that the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is going in the opposite direction by rolling back regulations regarding methane. Methane has been found to be anywhere from 30 to 80 times more impactful than CO<sub>2</sub> in trapping heat in the atmosphere per unit of measurement. Based on that fact alone, the EPA should be more restrictive where methane discharges occur, not less.*

*It is also disturbing to see the White House roll back the clean car standards by changing the mileage goals of the auto industry. I, along with City of Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and Councilwoman Strassburger, was glad to stand with Attorney General Josh Shapiro as he announced he was joining with Attorneys General across the country in opposing this rollback.*

*Professor Michael Mann, Director of Earth System Science at Penn State University, frequently talks about cars being one of the biggest factors contributing to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Dr. Mann states that increasing the use of public transit and bike commuting can have a huge impact.*

*In Allegheny County alone, we have nearly one (1) million vehicles registered. It is estimated that each car emits about six (6) tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. This contributes approximately 75% of the CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere.*

*In Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, we have seen how investments in public transit and bike infrastructure can reduce vehicular road miles driven. We also are moving forward on a Bus Rapid Transit system to connect our two largest job centers – downtown and Oakland. This project will maximize the efficiency of roughly 1/3 of the system by using electric vehicles powered in large part by solar energy.*

*Swapping a diesel-fueled bus with an electric version would yield the same environmental benefits as removing more than 30,000 cars from the road. While we're some years away from a full replacement of our fleet of 727 transit buses, reports have shown that the Port Authority of Allegheny County could cut 23,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year if it transitioned to electric alternatives.*

*Allegheny County is also an active participant in the Pittsburgh 2030 District, joining the effort as a partner before municipal governments were part of the program. The county has consistently been the top finisher in the municipal category for Pittsburgh 2030 and has been also recognized for waste reduction, water savings and leading in other best management practices. We've reduced the carbon emissions generated from our use of electricity, steam, bulk fuel, refrigerants, vehicles, streetlights, water and waste by a total of 13.8% or 10.526 tons of CO2 (or the amount emitted from 23.4 million miles driven by an average passenger vehicle).*

*For Allegheny County, 35% of its energy purchases are certified renewable energy saving taxpayer dollars, cutting our carbon footprint, increasing demand for renewable energy, and growing the region's clean energy economy. Our county already leads the state in the number of clean-energy jobs with 11,950 jobs in the wind, solar, energy efficiency and clean vehicle industries.*

*We also have begun a reforestation program in our county parks. Partnering with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Allegheny County Conservation District, TreePittsburgh, and the Allegheny County Parks Foundation – and involving school children from across the county – we have planted over 2,000 trees this year alone. We know that each tree absorbs approximately 50 pounds of CO2 annually, and that planting trees are one of the best ways to impact air quality.*

*Impacting climate change is going to take everyone's participation and the steps taken don't need to be large ones, but they do need to be positive. We know that most of the big solutions will come from the federal government using tax policy to move toward sustainable energy, and away from fossil fuels. But state and local governments can be part of the solution. We must put policies in place at the state and federal level that reduce CO2 and methane levels, not increase them. Working together, we can continue to find new ways to impact the climate and our environment. I look forward to working with all of you.*

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