

**POWER: An Interfaith Movement**

**10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY  
POWER  
CELEBRATE JUSTICE!**

[www.powerinterfaith.org](http://www.powerinterfaith.org)

August 1, 2022

Dear Members of City Council,

We are writing in support of the requests that POWER Interfaith has put forward for PGW's next operating budget.

The Philadelphia Gas Commission will vote on August 9th to approve an FY 2023 operating budget for the utility. In advance of that decision, we ask you to join us in urging adoption of measures that are needed to protect clean air and a livable climate, ensure affordability, and safeguard workers. These measures will yield clear goals, quantifiable progress reports, and stakeholder engagement in key decisions.

Philadelphians are facing interconnected crises: extreme weather driven by the climate emergency, toxic pollution that causes asthma and other health problems, and rising costs for fossil fuels. Communities with the least power and wealth are harmed most. And we face the threat of much greater harm without immediate, decisive action.

As the US Supreme Court creates obstacles to climate protection at the federal level and as prospects for transformative action by Congress fade, the **need for local leadership here in Philadelphia is now more urgent than ever.**

In order for Philadelphia to meet its climate goals, the City must **begin now to transform PGW into a utility that supplies affordable heating and cooling without the use of fossil fuels.** It is important to protect and create good union jobs in the process. And it is crucial to reduce greenhouse gas pollution rapidly to stabilize the climate and protect our health.

PGW has taken small steps in the right direction over the past year. The utility's commitments fall far short of what is needed, however. At the same time, PGW executives continue to aggressively pursue new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure.

PGW's proposed FY 2023 operating budget does not reflect the urgency of the climate crisis. In addition, it does not provide the transparency and accountability that Philadelphians expect from our public institutions. The budget does not appear to uphold [directives that Mayor Kenney issued](#) in relation to these concerns in December 2021.

In the fiscal year that begins September 1, we need PGW to **carry out transparent, participatory planning that matches the City's goal for eliminating climate-damaging pollution.** As detailed in a [testimony](#) and [legal brief](#) that POWER recently submitted to the Philadelphia Gas Commission, that means:

1. **Planning thermal network (geothermal) pilot projects** that can be initiated in the following year, with
  - a. processes that involve thorough public input and regular updates
  - b. clear measurable goals
  - c. a commitment to benefiting low-income communities while maximizing participation by PGW workers
2. **Business diversification reporting and stakeholder engagement** – The public needs regular, detailed reports about efforts to diversify PGW’s business away from the sale of fossil fuels and regular opportunities to provide input.
3. **Comprehensive, transparent planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**, with
  - a. significant public input and reports at each stage of the work
  - b. a commitment to setting measurable pollution reduction goals for 2025 and 2030

In the coming years, PGW can play a key role in building the healthy and just energy system we need. That potential will only be realized if our elected officials direct the utility’s executives to carry out these essential tasks in a transparent manner, with regular and thorough public input. The Gas Commission can require these measures when it approves PGW’s next operating budget. We hope you will urge them to do so.

Thank you,

1. 8th Street Community Church – Andy Kim, Pastor
2. By Grace Alone Church – Gabriel Wang-Herrera, Servant Lead Pastor
3. Centennial Parkside CDC – Chris Spahr, Centennial Parkside CDC
4. Clean Air Council – Joseph Minott, Executive Director and Chief Counsel
5. Clean Water Action – Maurice M. Sampson II, Eastern Pennsylvania Director
6. Delaware Riverkeeper Network – Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director
7. Drexel Dayenu Circle – Atara Saunders, Co-President
8. Geodelphia – Mehdi Entezari, President
9. Hunting Park Community Revitalization Corp. – Charles Lanier, Executive Director
10. Hunting Park Community Solar Initiative – Allen Drew, President
11. Make the Road PA – Myriam Ramirez, Community Organizer
12. PennEnvironment – David Masur, Executive Director
13. PennFuture – Matthew Stepp, Interim President & CEO
14. PennPIRG – Emma Horst-Martz, Advocate
15. Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light – David Heayn-Menendez, Executive Director
16. Philly DSA – Jordan Teicher, We Own PGW Campaign Coordinating Committee
17. Philly Neighborhood Networks – Gloria Gilman, Chair
18. Philly Thrive – Shawmar Pitts, Strategy Organizer
19. Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania – Linnea Bond, Health Educator
20. Reclaim Philadelphia – Corey Reidy, Co-Lead of Climate Justice Caucus
21. Sierra Club of Southeastern PA – Lindsay Christinee, Executive Committee Member
22. Sunrise Movement Philly – Edward Brown, Hub Coordinator
23. St. Gabriel’s Episcopal Church – William Rusk, Vicar’s Warden
24. The Climate Witness Project – Andrew Oppong, Social Justice Content Manager
25. UUs of Mt. Airy – McKinley Lynn Sims, Senior Minister