



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pennsylvania Youth Gain Support For Their Climate Change Petition at Environmental Quality Board Hearing, But Majority of Board Deny the Petition

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania – At a public hearing this morning, the Pennsylvania Environmental Quality Board (EQB) voted not to move forward with 20-year-old Ashley Funk’s climate change petition. Ashley, a Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania native, filed her petition for rulemaking last September to the EQB and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to strictly limit and regulate fossil fuel CO₂ emissions, and to establish an emissions reduction strategy in line with achieving 350 parts per million atmospheric CO₂ concentration by 2100.

At the hearing, the EQB reviewed a [report](#) the DEP filed on Ashley’s petition, the [comments](#) Ashley’s attorneys filed in response to the report, and the DEP’s [recommendation](#) on the petition, and by a vote of 17-3 the EQB accepted the DEP’s recommendation and rejected Ashley’s petition.

Ashley presented persuasive arguments during the EQB’s hearing and asked the Board to fulfill its constitutional mandate to ensure that Pennsylvania does its part to reduce carbon emissions, and protect its citizens.

Ashley’s petition relies on Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, also known as the “Environmental Rights Amendment”, which states:

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. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people

The legal driver for Ashley’s petition is that the Pennsylvania Commonwealth has public trust responsibilities enshrined in Article I, Section 27 of the State’s Constitution, and the issue at

hand is whether and to what extent the State's response to climate change is meeting its constitutional responsibilities.

"We are disappointed in today's result," said Ashley's attorney, Kenneth Kristl. "We intend to explore next steps to make sure Pennsylvania meets its constitutional obligations to provide Pennsylvanians like Ashley the clean environment they are entitled to receive."

Ashley asked the State of Pennsylvania to adopt a carbon dioxide emissions reductions plan that is consistent with the best available science described by Dr. James Hansen, the nation's top climatologist, in his most recent [paper](#). Such a plan would reduce state-wide fossil fuel carbon dioxide emissions by at least 6% annually until at least 2050.

"Pennsylvania could have taken a major stride towards addressing climate change today by initiating a process and establishing a metric by which to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our state," said Ashley Funk. "But, instead, the EQB disappointed me and the other young people they are supposed to represent. They denied my petition, saying the state is doing enough, but their numbers don't add up with the science. Pennsylvania's carbon dioxide emissions are not declining nearly enough. Representatives of the DEP said it would be too difficult to measure and regulate greenhouse gases like I asked. But climate change is a difficult problem to handle, and so it requires difficult solutions."

Ashley's petition was filed by Kenneth Kristl, from Widener Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic, with the help of [Our Children's Trust](#), an Oregon-based nonprofit orchestrating a global game-changing, youth driven legal campaign. The legal effort advances the fundamental duty of government today: to address the climate crisis based on scientific baselines and benchmarks, and to do so within timeframes determined by scientific analysis.

Ashley shares her personal story with climate change in [TRUST Pennsylvania](#), available here: <http://ourchildrenstrust.org/video/368/trust-pennsylvania>

***Our Children's Trust** is a nonprofit organization advocating for urgent emissions reductions on behalf of youth and future generations, who have the most to lose if emissions are not reduced. OCT is spearheading the international human rights and environmental TRUST Campaign to compel governments to safeguard the atmosphere as a "public trust" resource. We use law, film, and media to elevate their compelling voices. Our ultimate goal is for governments to adopt and implement enforceable science-based Climate Recovery Plans with annual emissions reductions to return to an atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration of 350 ppm. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/*

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