

Comment by Barbara Brandom, Allegheny

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

I am concerned about the adverse effects of data centers on communities. These developments produce continuous noise & light, and have produced serious water pollution and air pollution. If gas is used to power data centers, pollution will be much worse, as will the storms we all must endure.

I support the following statement from the Better Path Coalition and No False Climate Solutions PA. “The problems being addressed in PUC’s tentative order are largely manufactured ones resulting from the state’s rush to get into the data center business before the boom goes bust. As is too often the case, the public is only engaged after the big decisions are made. Our first opportunity to comment comes when the only things left to decide are how to deal with the new project/business/industry. At that point, advancement of the thing under consideration is taken to be an inevitability when it really isn’t. Therefore, we feel it is important to state up front that we oppose the approval of hyperscale data centers in Pennsylvania based on many well-documented concerns about their environmental, health, safety, climate, quality of life, economic, and ethical impacts that scattershot regulations across agencies, in this case tariffs, cannot address. Our regulatory agencies should be our advocates, using their expertise to stop the state from creating preventable problems rather than resigning themselves to managing them.”

I do not want my taxes to support the development of hyper datacenters that support AI and cryptomining. AI and cryptomining must be done by means that consume less energy, if they are to be developed at all. Our government must consider a broader definition of risks and benefits before committing resources to these industries which serve only an elite.

Electricity generation is not regulated in Pennsylvania, so the tariff only pertains to distribution costs. If approved, the tariff would not protect the public from generation costs which account for roughly 45% of consumer energy bills. Carnegie Mellon and its research partners projected that electricity generation costs will increase by as much as 25% by 2030.

Carnegie Mellon and its research partners say that already “Virginia's data center growth drives increased fossil fuel use in nearby states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, potentially undermining state and regional climate goals.”, Natural gas would be used to power data centers. Methane leaks occurring at every step of natural gas production, transmission, and distribution exacerbate climate change. Hundreds of thousands of

legacy wells leaking methane unchecked further add to the state's contribution to the climate crisis. Continued and even increased natural gas production to power data centers is unacceptable. According to Carnegie Mellon and its research partners, "Power sector emissions could increase 30% compared to scenarios without data center growth, reaching 275 million metric tonnes of CO2 annually by 2030. That matches the entire annual carbon output of France."

The reporting requirements are out of step with the state's efforts to fast-track data center approvals. The tentative order states that compliance reports must be filed on an annual basis by the end of the first quarter of the following year. Compliance data should be available on a real-time basis so that pertinent information is accessible as future data centers are fast-tracked. Throughout the discussion of the tentative order, the PUC's disposition fell short of imposing the most stringent requirements on large load customers. Therefore, the tentative order is weak and inadequate.

I hope that Pennsylvanians will continue to enjoy their constitutional rights to clean air, clean water, and enjoyment of the natural environment.

Somehow these restraints must be imposed on those who permit new industrial developments.