

Comment by Ann Coleman, Lancaster

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

The unique farmland of Lancaster County and surrounding areas must not be destroyed for resources-eating data centers. Once this land is gone, it will never be recoverable. And what about the damage done to surrounding farms that will be impacted by possible loss of water for irrigation or electrical capacity? Increased air pollution will be hazardous for people and animals. The production of huge energy requirements will be devastating to the environment. If they are built at all, these centers must be built away from civilization where there is no other use for the land. Much more research is needed.

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.”

Not in or near Lancaster County!

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.

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.”, 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.

PUC's order requires Large Load Customers to contribute to the utility's hardship fund; this is unfair, especially given the stunning figure cited by Commissioner Barrow that, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, "nearly a quarter of all Pennsylvanians have been unable to pay an energy bill in full in the last 12 months." The fact that there is no agreement on contributions to the hardship fund among all of the commissioners is extremely concerning.

Do not destroy the environment to satisfy the requirements of a technology that has its own questions of value. Make it prove itself first, and then weigh the value of investing in it vs. the harm it may do.