

Comment by Donna Ruff, Allegheny

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

As the residents who experience the results of data centers on our communities, including our electricity and water availability and prices, we need to have review and say in what occurs.

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 appreciate the jump-on-board approach without careful consideration to the impact. I will not remain an Allegheny County resident, and potentially not a state resident, if we are not considered in decision-making. Why should we, as residents, as families, bear the brunt of potential negative effects of large AI data centers without due consideration to our input, and due cost to the owners of them? And we certainly do NOT want our children, and later our grandchildren, to pay the price in health, quality of life, or cost.

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.

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., 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., 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.

We are extremely tired of having what is perceived to be advancement and opportunity shoved down our throats at OUR cost. Enough is more than enough. When will advancement be made in how these decisions are made?