

Comment by Lois Drumheller, Allegheny

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

The priority duty is to do no harm to the Commonwealth when considering how it utilizes its natural resources. This is self-explanatory as documented in Pennsylvania's Green Amendment (Art 1, Sec. 27). We, the People of this commonwealth, our right to clean air and water precedes any large megawatt consumers' right to exist. The people's rights are prioritized as the first rights with respect to energy production.

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.”

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 the Bipartisan Policy Center, “The exact trajectory of future electricity use by data centers is unknown due to 1) improvements in AI system efficiency; 2) the unpredictability of demand for AI services; and 3) limits in manufacturing production capacity of AI chips, servers, and associated infrastructure.” The PUC is operating in the dark as it attempts to establish a tariff.

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.”

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.

This Commonwealth must update its real time assessment of Pennsylvanians ability to invest in their family's well being for generations to come, given the real costs of local, state, taxes and a living wage. To truly see this, courts must evaluate the risks of fossil fuel production, especially in ramping up that production. Pennsylvania needs to understand that for a return of where it's invested, citizen's needs and health are the most important assessment as citizens are the ones who will be left to cover the mistakes.