

Comment by Martha Franklin, Susquehanna

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

As a resident of a county where Marcellus shale fracking was pursued without adequate studies and oversight on its effects on our environment, I urge the state to take time to carefully weigh the impacts of data centers on its communities. Too often, the pursuit of profits for a few cause harm to those who may not have the resources to protect themselves.

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.”

When is our government going to start protecting our planet? When it's too late? Don't be careless and greedy. We've seen the results of those in mining, drilling and fracking. They've been devastating.

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.

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.

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.

Too often, the state has rushed through or inadequately instituted oversight of well-funded industries at the cost of environmental and community health. Stop repeating this cycle of recklessness.