Comment by Richard St. John, Allegheny County

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

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."

Approving new mega-data centers is an incredibly short-sighted idea. They escalate energy and other usage usage, negatively affect the climate crisis, create few jobs. And for what? Two major uses are for Bitcoin generation (a speculative ponzi scheme associated with money laundering and illicit activity) and "AI" (a highly unregulated set of industries being sparked by hyped investment expectations. The chips used in data centers deteriorate quickly due to high energy transmission -- requiring high continuous investment, not likely to be supported by the current "AI boom."

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., 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 CO_2 annually by 2030. That matches the entire annual carbon output of France."