

Comment by Ann Vinatieri, Luzerne

Re: Docket No. M-2025-3054271

Commissioner Ralph Yanora is from the region in which my family and I reside, and I hope that each Commissioner remembers the fellow Pennsylvanians whom they are entrusted to help protect at this time. This is an unprecedented time in our state and calls for sober, ethical and scrupulous consideration. Tariffs are one way in which Pennsylvanians could be protected, and yet, this proposal falls far short of meaningful protections.

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.”

PA is the leading producer and exporter of electricity not only in the PJM grid, but also the entire United States since 2008. The sudden jump in large load customers in PA and beyond, demanding more power and the ensuing grid instability, makes this apparent: the entire situation is clearly manufactured "need/solution". As such, PA is woefully unprepared for this energy onslaught, and the proposed, optional tariff structure is merely political theater. It is upon the PUC to enact robust, careful, and thorough, all encompassing tariffs, along with provisions in place for generation costs that effect consumer energy costs. Furthermore, these tariffs ought to be required, not optional.

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.

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.”

PUC’s order requires Large Load Customers to contribute to the utility’s hardship fund, but provides no relief for residential customers ; 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., 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.

The PUC has one shot to get this right while it really matters; please go about this the responsible and ethical way, regardless of political or lobbying pressure. Our great Commonwealth deserves it.

Thank you, Ann Vinatieri (Sugarloaf Township, Luzerne County, PA)