

TESTIMONY OF THE PROGRESS AUTHORITY

TO

HOUSE REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE

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SRBC Testimony

Good morning members of the committee. I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. My name is Anthony Ventello, Executive Director of the Progress Authority. We are a certified economic development agency chartered in Pennsylvania as a general-purpose authority, industrial development authority and industrial development corporation focused by county contract in all of Bradford and Susquehanna Counties. We are in our 25th year and I have been there since the organization's formation. Much like yourselves, we are a group of private business and public officials who actively support investment and employment opportunities.

Approximately 9 years ago natural shale gas development began in the Susquehanna River Valley. To date, Bradford and Susquehanna counties are the two most drilled upon counties with the highest production of natural gas comprising 38% of Pennsylvania's total natural gas production. Initially, we strove to educate ourselves by gathering information and traveling to many locations in the US and Canada. We have also hosted numerous visitors from Asia, the Ukraine, Australia, South America, Canada, and Europe. We aggressively pursued the impacts of natural gas development, specifically to understand its relationships to communities, our local government, our environment, education, agriculture and economic

development. Our greatest educator has been the last 9 years of history. I live, work and raised a family in the Marcellus gas play.

I can stand before you as a rural professional, father and community participant and enlighten you as to the impacts of natural gas drilling to our community and state. I have prepared and given several testimonies to citizens and legislators such as yourselves. In September of 2016, I had the honor of presenting to the United States Congress Committee on Science, Space and Technology. A copy of that power point is in front of you. I am not going to review this presentation as our time today will not allow; however, the positive community and economic development impacts are prolific. As a result, much needed infrastructure has been developed in the forms of public water, sewer, clean power, broadband development, natural gas distribution, two new hospitals, clean self-sufficient co-generation/CHP and CNG public transportation. Specific funds for housing improvements and first-time homeowners' programs, recreation, environmental conservation, public safety with two new 911 centers and development funds that as of this month includes a new non-profit revolving loan program.

We are now seeing jobs and investment with value-added vertical integration of natural gas for power generation, CNG, LNG and GTL. This demands huge investment. Pennsylvania's future lies with focusing on value-added natural gas as not to treat this resource like a third

world country by completely exporting this valuable resource. We must maximize its full potential in our state. We need to develop a statewide energy policy to embrace and target its development and use. Like milk and timber let's make cheese and hardwood cabinets before it leaves our state. A moratorium will not promote this prosperity.

The confusing aspect of the Marcellus Share region is that it is geographically defined. This limits the practical knowledge of many of our state residents, unlike states that have decades of experience. I contend that in order to fully understand and embrace the industry one must truly recognize the geographic differences and not the similarities of other non-Pennsylvania shale gas development areas.

Amazingly, we are seeing that agriculture in our region is on the rise. Recent data from Penn State Agricultural Extension and the USDA show our agricultural production stable and rising. 2001 – 2008 dairy cow numbers were declining, the same time natural gas development arrived. Natural gas has provided income to farmers to reinvest in the farm, purchase new equipment, building improvements, pursue new markets, diversify and acquire additional land. Bradford County is amongst the top ten (one of the top two in dairy) producers with large farms and the other nine have no gas wells. Increases in corn, soybean, beef, swine, poultry, egg production and niche farming like maple syrup and orchards, etc. are being

experienced. The future of agriculture is bright for our region with land, abundant water resources, existing farm services and proximity to market. This is God-given just like the proximity of the Marcellus shale to service the eastern megalopolis of the United States. People need food and energy.

As the County Planner prior to my current position, I contend that natural gas has been a complementary land use, has kept land in large parcels which is conducive to agriculture and wildlife which maintains a rural style of life.

It has also enhanced tourism. As a sportsman, I can attest that the river fishing on the Susquehanna is great with abundant small mouth, walleye and other species. Deer and small game hunting is fantastic as Bradford and Susquehanna Counties still are top harvest counties while maintaining the most gas wells. My greatest fear is that if a moratorium was to permanently ban natural gas development in the Delaware River Basin, that both economic prosperity and its benefits to rural Pennsylvania would be stripped from this region and that attempts will be made to enact moratoriums in other uninhabited river basins and water sheds experiencing the positive impacts of natural gas development.

I believe our greatest opportunity is beneath us to balance Pennsylvania both as a leader in opportunities for business development in concert with a very high quality of life.

I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and will be available for any questions.