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Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee
Multi-State Policy Hearing on Energy
Powering the Mid-Atlantic: Restoring Energy Affordability and Reliability
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Testimony of:
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Chairman Rowe, members of the House Republican Policy Committee, members of the New Jersey General Assembly and the Maryland and Virginia House of Delegates, I am Rachel Gleason, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Coal Alliance (PCA). I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on Restoring Energy Affordability and Reliability.

The PCA is the principal trade organization representing underground and surface bituminous coal operators in Pennsylvania, as well as other associated companies whose businesses rely on coal mining and a strong coal economy. Nationally, Pennsylvania is the third largest coal producing state, and PCA member companies produce over 90 percent of the bituminous coal mined annually in Pennsylvania, which totaled over 41 million tons in 2024. As an advocate for Pennsylvania's coal industry, of which a considerable amount of our production is thermal fuel used to generate electricity in Pennsylvania, PJM and the United States, I would like to preface my testimony today by underscoring the importance of an all-of-the-above energy strategy, which includes coal. Every resource that can contribute to a reliable, resilient, affordable and secure electric grid should play a role in providing power.

During the summer of 2019, Jim Robb, the president and CEO of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), said that when most engineers look at the Texas grid, they conclude that "there's no way in hell they can keep the lights on. And yet they do."[1] Speaking in front of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, (FERC) Robb also commented on his amazement at how California was managing to keep the lights

[1] https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/1060709303

on despite immensely challenging circumstances, including shrinking reserve margins and the loss of dispatchable fuel diversity. Those remarks have since proved painfully observant as both states have experienced blackouts, leaving millions of residents in the dark. Despite years of warnings, the reality we now face is that the threats to reliability have only grown more acute. Exactly one week ago, Robb said at a FERC grid reliability conference that the state of the nation's grid reliability is a "five-alarm fire."[2]

Concern over grid reliability, and moreover resource adequacy, is not a new topic; warnings across the nation and in the PJM RTO have been voiced for years, yet the red flags have been ignored. These warnings have been fueled by policies that have subsidized intermittent energy sources at the expense of reliable, dispatchable sources like coal-fired generation, leading to premature plant retirements, and have been exacerbated by rapid load growth from electrification initiatives across sectors. What we didn't know several years ago was the rapid rise of advanced artificial intelligence and the unfettered growth of data centers, which has intensified an existing reliability problem, and fast-tracked an electricity affordability crisis.

In February of 2023 I testified in front of this Committee on this exact topic in the wake of Winter Storm Elliott when Keystone and Conemaugh Generating Stations in Armstrong and Indiana Counties once again saved the grid. Combined, these two powerhouses represent 3.4 GW of reliable and resilient power that operated without fail during the storm. Coal's ability to provide baseload power is unmatched by any other fuel source in affordability, flexibility, reliability, resiliency and security. PJM gives coal an Effective Load Carrying Capability (ELCC), or reliability contribution, of 83%, ranking third behind nuclear and diesel utility as a generation source. Fast forward to 6:00 p.m. on June 23, 2025, electricity demand rose to one of the highest levels in PJM in the past decade, surging by nearly 70% to exceed 160 GW. During that time coal-fired generation more than doubled in PJM, increasing from 14.5 GW to 31 GW, and also exhibited the most pronounced increase when its capacity factor rose from 40% during the week of June 8–15 to 81% during the June 2025 peak day.[3] A critical portion – 14 GW – of the coal fleet that prevented blackouts during Winter Storm Elliott and the heatwave in June is slated for retirement before 2030, largely due to regulatory and policy pressures. Had that 14 GW of coal-fired generation not been available when demand surged during those extreme events, the remaining units available would not have been able to match the generation needed. Coal-fired generation once again proved indispensable by ramping output under stressed conditions and preventing widespread blackouts.

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[2] https://www.utilitydive.com/news/data-center-grid-reliability-ferc-nerc/803467/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Issue:%202025-10-22%20Utility%20Dive%20Newsletter%20%5Bissue:78053%5D&utm_term=Utility%20Dive

[3] https://americaspower.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2025_07_07-2025-June-Heatwave-Report-FINAL.pdf

PJM is forecasting capacity shortages as early as next year, driven by reserve margins dropping amid surging demand. PJM needs more power - long-duration dispatchable capacity power - because you can't run a reliable and resilient grid based on the weather. As such, we are in a period of energy addition, but adding new, reliable, dispatchable capacity takes time and is proving to be an immense challenge. Data centers are swallowing new turbine orders and prices for turbines are soaring with the supply chain struggling to keep up.[4] Just last week, the GE Vernova CEO commented that an analyst's estimate of U.S. turbine cost at $2,500 a kW is "a practical illustration of where the market is today."[5] Adding to the challenges, expanding pipeline infrastructure at the speed and scale needed is a tall order at best, and the potential deployment of nuclear power is not a practical near-term answer to the grid's demands. Considering this, maintaining the existing coal fleet isn't just a reliability imperative, it is a necessity. Keeping all of the available capacity we need online rather than prematurely shuttering it will be essential for energy security, grid reliability, and mitigating price pressures that will otherwise continue to escalate for ratepayers.

Increases in electricity prices are a result of the reliability crisis, but other contributing factors like artificially low capacity prices in many recent years, capital expenditures on new infrastructure and fuel price volatility are also drivers. Coal generation is already taking market share and serving as a price shock absorber for consumers, and at the most recent 2026/2027 capacity auction coal-fired generation was the second largest source of generating capacity that cleared the auction, demonstrating its competitive and important role in both reliability and affordability.

Thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome any questions.

[4] https://gasoutlook.com/analysis/costs-to-build-gas-plants-triple-says-ceo-of-nextera-energy/#:~:text=NextEra%20built%2016%20gigawatts%20of,or%20later%2C%E2%80%9D%20Ketchum%20said.
[5] https://www.utilitydive.com/news/ge-vernova-bullish-on-electrical-infrastructure-as-turbine-backlog-grows/803631/