

Testimony of Rich Weyant

Shirley's Cookie Company
Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee
"Keeping Pennsylvania Moving: Addressing the Rising Cost of Energy"
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Members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Rich Weyant, and I work in manufacturing and transportation at Shirley's Cookie Company in Claysburg, Pennsylvania.

I'd like to give you a real-world look at how rising energy costs are affecting a Pennsylvania manufacturer and the decisions we have to make every day.

I'll start with electricity. I brought actual electric bills from both of our facilities, which include our manufacturing and warehousing operations. I compared the same June billing period in 2022, 2025, and 2026.

In June 2022, we used **169,008 kilowatt-hours**, and our total electric cost was **\$14,361.73**.

In June 2025, we used about the same amount, **170,592 kilowatt-hours**, but the cost increased to **\$18,413.39**.

Then, in June 2026, our usage actually dropped to **160,832 kilowatt-hours**, but our cost went up again to **\$21,611.81**.

Just from 2025 to 2026, **we used 5.7 percent less electricity and paid 17.4 percent more**. That's about **\$3,200 more in one month while using less power**.

If you go back to 2022, the difference is far greater. **We're using 4.8 percent less electricity but paying 50.5 percent more**. That's about **\$7,250 more for one month**.

We have also made a serious effort to control our usage. Over the last two years, we've invested **hundreds of thousands of dollars** in things like LED lighting and more efficient HVAC systems.

And the numbers show that those investments are working. We are using less electricity. The problem is that the increases in the cost of electricity are overtaking the savings we're getting from those investments.

For us, electricity isn't something we can do without. It runs our production equipment, refrigeration and freezers, compressed air, conveyors, packaging equipment, lighting, and just about everything else in the facility.

Natural gas is another major expense. We've tried to take some control over that by purchasing our natural gas on the open market and hedging against future price increases. That gives us some predictability and helps us plan our costs.

We try to control the expenses we can. The problem is there are a lot of energy-related expenses that we can't control.

Diesel and petroleum are good examples.

When diesel goes up, it costs more to get ingredients and raw materials to our facility. It also costs more to get finished products to our customers.

Petroleum prices affect us in other ways too. We use a lot of plastic packaging, and because those materials are petroleum-based, higher petroleum prices can mean higher packaging costs.

Pennsylvania's high diesel fuel tax adds to those transportation costs and makes it more expensive to manufacture and move products here compared with states with lower fuel taxes.

So when energy prices increase, we don't see that increase in just one place. We see it in our electric bill, our packaging, our ingredients, our freight, and eventually in the overall cost of making our product.

We can't simply pass every increase along to our customers. We compete with manufacturers in other states and other countries. Our customers have choices. If our prices get too high, they can buy somewhere else. So a lot of these increases have to be absorbed by the business.

And that's where I think this really starts affecting our employees.

Money spent covering higher operating costs is money we can't use somewhere else. It could have gone toward wages and benefits, hiring and training employees, new equipment, or automation.

Automation is especially important to our survival. It helps us remain competitive while moving employees away from repetitive or physically demanding work and into safer, more skilled positions. But automation requires significant investment.

When more of our capital has to go toward electricity, transportation, packaging, and other operating expenses, something else has to give. An equipment or automation project may get pushed back, an expansion may not happen, or there may simply be less money available for wages, benefits, or another employee.

Our employees are dealing with many of these same increases at home. They're paying higher energy and transportation costs, along with higher prices for the things they buy every day.

That's why, from my perspective, energy affordability isn't just an energy issue. **It's a workforce issue and a competitiveness issue.**

I also think there is an opportunity for Pennsylvania to help manufacturers become part of the solution.

We've already invested significant amounts of our own money to reduce energy consumption. I would encourage the Legislature to look at ways to help manufacturers take the next step by investing in things like **on-site solar, battery storage, and other demand-reduction technologies.**

Grants, tax incentives, low-interest financing, or stronger demand-response programs could help make those investments financially practical. If manufacturers can reduce their peak demand, we can lower our operating costs while also reducing demand on the electric grid.

We're willing to invest our own money. **We just need the economics of these projects to make sense.**

Pennsylvania has tremendous energy resources, a long history of manufacturing, and a skilled workforce. We should be doing everything we reasonably can to make this a state where companies want to manufacture products, invest in facilities, and employ people.

When you're considering energy policy, I'd ask you to look beyond just the electric bill or the price at the diesel pump. Look at how those costs work their way through a business and what that money could have been used for — an employee raise, another job, a safer piece of equipment, an automation project, or an expansion.

We want to keep investing in Pennsylvania, and we want to keep investing in our employees. **Affordable, reliable energy helps give Pennsylvania manufacturers the ability to do both.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I appreciate your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Weyant

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