



Testimony of Thomas A. Gilbert

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Energy Master Plan: Sustainable & Resilient Infrastructure

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the update to the Energy Master Plan. We applaud the Governor and the Board of Public Utilities for setting a goal of 100% clean energy by 2050. This is the kind of visionary leadership that is necessary to respond to the enormous threat of climate change, and to propel New Jersey to the front of the pack in developing a prosperous clean energy economy.

First, we'd like to stress that 100% clean energy should be defined as 100% renewable energy. As my colleague Barb Blumenthal testified at the first hearing on clean energy, cutting-edge modelling done in other states shows that a clean-energy portfolio based upon renewables, efficiency and storage can achieve deep decarbonization while ensuring reliability and lower costs.

A recent Farleigh Dickson University Poll (enclosed) of over 700 registered voters for Rethink Energy NJ found that three out of four support 100% renewable energy by 2050, 66% do not think natural gas is clean, and 75% think the state should invest in renewables rather than more fossil fuels and pipelines.

We need an Energy Master Plan that ensures we make the right investments in renewable energy infrastructure, and discourages the wrong investments in unneeded fossil fuel infrastructure, such as the proposed PennEast pipeline, that would be stranded assets that saddle ratepayers with unnecessary costs while furthering our dependence on natural gas, the primary source of emissions from the electric, residential and commercial sectors.

Under the Global Warming Response Act, New Jersey must reduce emissions from all sectors 80% by 2050. It will be impossible to reach this goal if the spate of newly proposed pipelines and gas-fired plants are constructed, as deep decarbonization of the electric sector will be necessary to meet this target.

The Energy Master Plan should identify interim targets by sector every five years that would put the state on the trajectory to achieve the 2050 GWRA targets, and develop a comprehensive plan to achieve those targets.

A 2017 report by Rutgers and the Georgetown Climate Center identified the need for a 75% reduction in emissions from 2012 levels to achieve the GWRA 2050 target, so we still have a long way to go and are not on track to meet this target.

The report identified a range of policy options that should be considered, including:

- Consider climate change impacts, the social cost of carbon, and contributions to attaining any new interim and the 2050 limits in major investments of public monies, including infrastructure and economic development investments, development and redevelopment of state facilities, and Executive Order 215 Reviews;
- Consider climate change impacts, attainment of any new interim and the 2050 limits, and a social cost of carbon metric in review of filings at the Board of Public Utilities.

The final Energy Master Plan should consider these and other policies that need to be implemented by the numerous state agencies that review proposed energy infrastructure projects, including the Department of Environmental Protection, to ensure that they use their authority to ensure consistency with the 2050 and interim GWRA targets, as part of their review.

We can't achieve a 100% clean energy future by solely focusing on growing renewables, storage and energy efficiency, although they are surely keys to success. We must also ensure that unneeded fossil fuel infrastructure projects that will impede meeting emission targets do not derail our progress.

Transitioning to 100% renewable energy is not only achievable and affordable, but it is absolutely essential to achieve deep decarbonization. Furthermore it will reduce costs, create tens of thousands of good, local jobs, and protect the health and safety of our communities.

Thank you for your work to put us on the path to a clean energy future.