

**Testimony of  
Ryan Boyer, Business Manager of the Laborers' District Council of the Metropolitan  
Area of Philadelphia and Vicinity, and President of the Philadelphia Building Trades**

**Before the  
Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee and Senate Local Government  
Committee**

**Public Hearing on SB 275  
May 11, 2021**

Thank you Chairman Yaw, Chairman Dush, Chairwoman Comitta, Chairman Kearney, and members of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee and Senate Local Government Committee, for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 275. I am Ryan Boyer, Business Manager of the Laborers' District Council of Philadelphia and President of the Philadelphia Building Trades Council. The Laborers' District Council of Philadelphia works on behalf of our more than 6,000 members by securing projects, promoting the hiring of union workers, and meeting the quality-of-life and quality-of-work needs of employees and employers in Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties. I am also President of the Philadelphia Building Trades Council, which provides essential coordination and support to the work of more than 50 affiliated local unions so that workers achieve a voice in government, bargaining, and their communities. I appreciate this opportunity to present information on behalf of many union members from Southeastern Pennsylvania.

**Support SB 275 because it Prevents Inconsistent Policies and Laws**

I encourage members the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee and Local Government Committees to support SB 275. The legislation would preserve the rights of citizens to choose their source of energy, including the right to choose renewable energy. The bill makes this policy uniform across the entire Commonwealth, and it prevents the creation of piecemeal or inconsistent laws that could be passed by the 5,000 local governments in Pennsylvania. I know that local governments are both well intended and very concerned about state legislation that they believe may preempt future local efforts, but the intent of this

legislation is to assure that the Commonwealth's energy policy is based on a unified pathway that is fair to all Pennsylvanians. Equitable statewide energy policy would be undercut by differing ordinances across local governments.

### Preserving Energy Choice Will Benefit Hard Working, Blue Collar Workers and Their Families

Generations of energy industry workers have built lives and livelihoods on building and maintaining a resilient network of energy delivery across the Commonwealth. Allowing local governments to restrict the type of energy available to citizens would end family-sustaining careers for many energy workers, without a clear pathway to sustaining jobs in the future. Even Bill McKibben, who is the leader of the environmental group 350.org, acknowledged that our workers would be left behind when he said that an energy transition made "pretty quickly" will "be difficult for the people who have done the necessary and useful work of providing energy for a long time." It is senseless to put so many workers at risk of financial devastation and to abandon so much infrastructure when we have not sufficiently explored and incentivized a use for this infrastructure in a way that will reduce emissions and keep well-trained workers in their jobs. This difficult and serious work is best undertaken together, as an entire Commonwealth, instead of permitting municipalities, who may lack the revenues and policy tools, to address these issues in ways that could potentially counteract each other.

### An Unjust and Financial Burden on Poor and Working Class Households

A lack of energy choices will not only hurt workers, it will hurt every Pennsylvania household. Being able to choose your own energy source is vitally important because there are significant costs related to mandating particular energy sources for individual households. For example, if a natural gas customer is forced to replace space and water heaters with electric equipment, the additional cost averages \$21,000 per converted household. This cost includes not only the cost of the equipment, but also increased energy costs. Additionally, many households using electricity for heat during the winter spend, on average, twice as much as those with natural gas. Increased demand for electricity in the future will further increase these costs to households and negatively impact Pennsylvanians who are in poverty, near

poverty, or working class. While my region, Philadelphia, has the highest rate of deep poverty in the country, Pennsylvania also has two dozen counties with high poverty rates, further highlighting the importance of evaluating energy pricing impacts on a statewide level.<sup>1</sup>

### The Electric Grid is Getting Cleaner and So Will the Transportation Sector

Pennsylvania, and the entire electric grid, have already seen the increased production of renewable energy, while costs have become more competitive. In fact, the City of Philadelphia recently entered into a long-term purchase agreement for solar energy, which costs about the same as their current electricity purchases.<sup>2</sup> And, with only 6% of the PJM grid coming from renewable sources in 2020,<sup>3</sup> there is still significant room to reduce emissions in the electricity grid. Moreover, the transportation sector is on a critical path to reducing emissions, with car companies like General Motors announcing that they are ending the sale of gas and diesel engine vehicles by 2035. As we see the electrical grid and vehicles becoming greener, and as we see the development of other green initiatives through the public and private sector, we should be mindful of the comprehensive impacts of policy decisions. We must not permit inconsistent local policy choices—such as restrictions on energy—to harm Pennsylvanians working in the energy industry and expose poor and working class households to increased energy costs.

For these reasons, I am supportive of SB 275, and I would encourage the members of your committees to support this bill, as well.

I thank you, once again, for the opportunity to provide comments on this legislation, and I would be glad to discuss this matter further at your request.

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<sup>1</sup> “Devastating poverty is the bridge that joins Pa.’s rural counties and urban cities – Opinion”; Philadelphia Inquirer, November 20, 2020

<sup>2</sup> “Large new solar farm would be built to supply electricity for Philly-owned buildings”; Philadelphia Inquirer, November 1, 2018

<sup>3</sup> PJM Environmental Information Services, Generation Attribute Tracking System; PJM System Mix by Fuel 01/2020-12/2020