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West Chester



Senate of Pennsylvania

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March 18, 2020

The Honorable Gladys Brown, Chair
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairman Brown,

It has come to our attention that despite the unprecedented steps taken by our federal and state governments to restrict and restrain the spread of a global pandemic, work continues on the construction of the Mariner East Pipeline. This is especially confusing and concerning as most throughout Chester and Delaware counties have drastically modified their everyday lives to protect our most vulnerable neighbors from the impacts of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). While we have a number of outstanding questions and concerns regarding this project, today we must insist that construction on this project be halted until such time that our national and state leadership have confidence COVID-19 has been contained and the state of emergencies have been lifted.

At this time, the United States Federal Government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Counties of Chester and Delaware and neighboring counties have declared disaster emergencies in response to the rapid spread of COVID-19. Throughout Pennsylvania, schools have been closed, small businesses have modified commerce, and we have asked citizens to reduce social contact by remaining home until the risk has passed.

While the majority of our constituents recognize the importance of their individual efforts collectively, we are profoundly perplexed by the decision to allow pipeline construction to continue. Not only will direct interaction during construction place skilled laborers at an unnecessary risk of infection, the movement of these individuals throughout our community increases the risk to all, including our essential workforce of medical professionals and first responders. In light of the fact that many, if not most, of our citizens are now sheltered at home to reduce the spread of COVID-19, we find it illogical that active construction of this pipeline be allowed to continue. After all, it was only a few short weeks ago that pipeline construction

activity in West Whiteland Township (Chester County) damaged a PECO natural gas distribution line directly adjacent to the Chester County Library.

I am also requesting this action based on the points listed below:

- Construction of a new pipeline that will ship hazardous natural gas liquids to Europe for plastics manufacturing is hardly 'an essential' service. It is certainly not more essential than construction of new transportation infrastructure like highway improvements, which PennDOT has halted.
- Governor Wolf's order that thousands of state employees work from home means that direct in-the-field oversight of the Mariner East Pipeline Project from DEP, PUC, and other state agencies, is most likely not taking place.
- Given Mariner East's long record of problems, combined with the fact that many residents are sheltering at home, we do not need to risk spills, inadvertent returns, damage to vital aquifers, contamination of private wells, geologic issues like sinkholes, or interruptions to water or utility service during this public health emergency.
- Finally, with so many residents working from and staying at home in close quarters and under stressful conditions, the quality of life impacts from pipeline construction, including excessive noise, dust, and potential air contaminants are only further amplified. Please remember, COVID-19 is a respiratory condition, which may be exacerbated by unhealthy air quality.

A state of emergency clearly fortifies the authority you already have in terms of shutting down pipeline construction, such as the Mariner East Pipeline Project, during periods of real or potential threats to the health, safety, and welfare of our Commonwealth residents. I am requesting immediate action from the PUC and a response to this request.

Sincerely,



Andrew E. Dinniman
PA Senate – 19th District

cc: Tom Wolf, Governor
Marian D. Moskowitz, Chair, Chester County Commissioners
Brian P. Zidek, Chair, Delaware County Council
June Perry, PUC Legislative Liaison