



# ***Pennsylvania State Building and Construction Trades Council*** AFL-CIO

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## **Testimony Before the Pennsylvania House ERE Committee October 30, 2023 Hearing on Setback Legislation**

**TESTIMONY BY: Robert S. Bair – President  
Pennsylvania Building & Construction Trades Council**

Chairman Vitali, Chairman Causer, my name is Rob Bair and I serve as President of the Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trades Council. The Council is comprised of 16 Regional Councils and more than 115 local unions from 15 International Building Trades Unions. We represent over 130,000 members across the Commonwealth, many who work each day, building and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to gather, process and transport our energy resources from the shale producing areas to families and businesses far and wide.

I thank Chairman Causer for extending the PA Building Trades this opportunity to participate in today's hearing. It is regrettable that organized labor and industry representatives were not asked to speak to the incredible negative impacts that would come about should House Bill 170 be enacted.

We have a strong stake in the energy future of the Commonwealth. The policies decided in the General Assembly and the executive branch have a direct impact on our members and their ability to support their families and communities across the state.

Just so there is no confusion: House Bill 170 is nothing more than a ban of new natural gas development in the Commonwealth. The provisions of this bill are so severe that no operator would seriously look at Pennsylvania as a place open for business. As demonstrated by a white paper developed by the Marcellus Shale Coalition, in some counties that are currently among the largest energy producing in the state, this bill would ban up to 99% of land from development.

Let us be clear: when you ban new development, you ban jobs for my members. If there are no new gas wells being drilled, there is no new infrastructure that is needed. Pipelines, processing facilities, new manufacturing plants, power plants needed to stabilize our electric grid – none of these would be built. To some who enjoy the benefits of our work without acknowledging their own dependence upon it, this may seem like good news. Such a view is detached from reality, and particularly insulting to my members when it is made by individuals who never have to worry about whether their next paycheck will arrive.

Where will our energy come from if this bill becomes law? It won't come from Pennsylvania. You will make us dependent, once again, on not only other states but other countries. And I can assure you – none of these other countries develop their energy resources to the worker safety and environmental standards that we insist upon here in Pennsylvania. The world is turbulent and unsettled, with strife impacting energy security and national security in Europe and the Middle East. Our energy security, in part due to our strong natural gas industry in Pennsylvania, is a protective buffer against the uncertainty on the world stage. This legislation would take us back to energy dependence and make energy independence a thing of the past.

This continued war on domestic energy is shortsighted. There is no appreciation of the critical role that fossil fuels play in our everyday life. These resources not only keep the lights on and the schools, hospitals, nursing homes and other critical facilities warmed or cooled – they are found in nearly every consumer and medical product we depend on each day. These are not simply luxury items – they are essential items that each of us use. They include some of the tools and devices our members use every day to perform safe and efficient tasks.

We support all forms of energy that provide job opportunities for our members. This includes renewable energy projects as well. But the reality is this: we cannot build wind turbines, we cannot build solar panels, without natural gas and its associated liquids. It is physically impossible, and the electric grid needs natural gas to perform when renewables live up to their intermittent nature.

Our members are extremely proud of the work they do each day. No one has higher worker safety or environmental protection standards than we do – because these workers are our family members, and we live in the communities in which we work. To state that this development must be banned because it cannot be done safely – a statement disproven by years of experience – is a slap in the face of the men and women we represent.

Organized labor has been accused of failing to support “good environmental policy”. It seems what is good environmental policy is in the eye of the beholder. Policies which rely on misinformation, misrepresentations -reckless rhetoric - which indict the work ethic and quality of the work of my members, which would deprive my members of job opportunities today and going forward, is not good environmental policy. It is foolish environmental policy, and that is exactly what House Bill 170 is.



ROBERT S. BAIR  
President