

Testimony at the Refinery Advisory Group Public Hearing, 9/9/2019

My name is Cheryl Pyrch. I'm the pastor at Summit Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and the chair of the Philadelphia Chapter of Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light, people of faith responding to climate change as a moral issue. Interfaith Power and Light is a national organization with affiliates in 40 states. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I'd like to start by acknowledging something that is obvious but often overlooked. Fossil fuels have been a blessing. They've given us a level of prosperity and longevity and achievement that past generations could not even imagine. Working in the industry has been honorable work and where there are unions it's relatively safe and well-paid. Granted, too often fossil fuels have been extracted and burned and refined with a reckless disregard for workers, for communities near fossil fuel operations, for the natural world on which we depend and for future generations. But, overall, fossil fuels have been a good thing.

But we all know that too much of a good thing can be lethal. And fossil fuels are now lethal. Scientists are in agreement on the facts: if we don't get to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in the next 30 years - which is the blink of an eye— we'll be facing ecological collapse and a level of economic chaos that we can only imagine. The lives and well-being of billions of people are at stake in the decisions we make today. No one wants to hear that news, because we know a transition will be hard and that even the most just transition will come at a cost. But that's reality. We need to face it. Climate change needs to be the "key factor in determining the viability of reuse options."

For that reason Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light opposes all new fossil-fuel infrastructure, and a reopened refinery falls into that category. No one is asking to close down all fossil fuel operations tomorrow. But there's no room for investment in a replacement plant that will incentivize us to accelerate climate change. Whatever other criteria we may have for making business decisions, doing what is right has to be front and center and woven throughout each one. And the right thing is clear: keep the refinery shut down. Remediate the site for other uses. Build something that will be a blessing for future generations as well as our own.

As people of faith, we also have hope. We're confident that working together we can move to a truly clean energy economy, with good jobs for all. But we need to have the courage to say NO to the wrong things so we can say YES to the right ones. I hope and pray that you, the Refinery Advisory group, and all of us, will have the courage and wisdom to do so.

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