

State of New Jersey
Board of Public Utilities
Fourth Solicitation for Offshore Wind Renewable Energy Certificates
Docket No. QO24020109

Comments by CHARGE

CHARGE – Consumers Helping Affect Regulation of Gas & Electric – submits the following comments in support of the opening of the fourth offshore wind solicitation by New Jersey’s Board of Public Utilities (“BPU”).

CHARGE is a grassroots group founded in 2018 to be the public voice for New Jersey’s more than 3 million individual consumers in public policy discussions, the legislative process, and the regulation of the utility and energy sectors.

First of all, we want to say that we support offshore wind projects. The world must reduce its carbon footprint and slow dramatic climate changes. The best way to do this is through sustainable and renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

A 2023 New York Times editorial stated that “To tap the potential of renewable energy, the United States needs to dramatically expand the electric grid between places with abundant wind and sunshine and places where people live and work. And it needs to happen fast.”

Unfortunately, this opinion’s push for new inland transmission lines is rooted in a dated business model that must be re-examined. Generating power far from end users and transmitting that power over hundreds if not thousands of miles away is a business model that is over 100 years old.

This business model needs miles and miles of high-power transmission lines with its attendant transmission loss, collateral damage to property owners along the route, and high costs to electric consumers. Dramatically expanding new transmission lines may not be the only answer and may not even be the right answer.

We believe a better alternative is offshore wind.

According to the US Department of Energy’s Wind Energy Technologies Office, there is data to suggest the potential for more than 4,000 gigawatts per year in federal waters of the

United States and Great Lakes. This is approximately 3 times the annual US electricity consumption.

At the same time, NOAA's National Ocean Service estimated that nearly 40% of the American population lived in counties on the coast.

Given that this renewable source of power is so much closer to the end users, it is vitally important and makes strategic sense to assign offshore wind as a high priority as part of our energy policy.

In addition to providing significant sustainable and renewable power close to end users without long transmission lines and its collateral damages, offshore wind projects have the potential to avoid millions of metric tons of CO2 emissions per year. This is the equivalent of millions of additional passenger vehicles per year. This will have beneficial impacts on overall air and water quality, allowing our communities to breathe easier.

We support offshore wind but want to make clear that these projects should be done in a responsible way to protect the environment, wildlife including marine life, the ocean ecosystem, fishermen, and recreational use of our shores. The use of a limited number of "backbone" connections shared by multiple offshore facilities to the grid onshore would minimize the environmental impact on our shore.

A lot has been written about the number of whales that have washed ashore dead. We share these concerns but we must also follow the science. We must let NOAA and other organizations do their work. Currently, they have not reported any evidence or links to the recent offshore planning activities to the deaths of the whales.

In conclusion, we support the responsible build-out of offshore wind in New Jersey that will support our clean energy goals, create jobs and clean our air.

Respectfully submitted this 26th day of March 2024

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