



March 13th, 2025

VIA NJ BPU PUBLIC DOCUMENT PORTAL

Honorable Sherri L. Golden, RMC
Secretary of the Board New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 1st Floor
P.O. Box 350 Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Re: DEP DOCKET NO. QO24020126

Dear Secretary Golden,

My name is Ashley Smith, and I am the Managing Director of Jersey 1st, an organization that advocates on behalf of the hardworking taxpayers and families of New Jersey.

I'm here to express my concerns with the outrageous electricity rate hikes that will go into effect this summer, as approved by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and as a result of the Energy Master Plan. These rate hikes, up to 20 percent, are more than double of any of last year's painful rate hikes. And in a state that's the most expensive in the entire nation, this is completely unacceptable.

Today, as you consider implementing a slightly revised Energy Master Plan that continues to mandate ONLY green energy by 2035, I would urge you to take a pause on this plan and prioritize affordability for New Jersey ratepayers. Ratepayers cannot afford another year of skyrocketing rate increases from an unrealistic and unaffordable Energy Master Plan.

Frankly, the current Energy Master Plan -- which prioritizes "green mandates" such as electrification, and electric vehicle mandates—puts ratepayers last.

That's because the current Energy Master Plan has failed to utilize important and affordable energy solutions -- such as nuclear, hydrogen, solar, and natural gas.

Over the past several years, the current Administration shut down important energy projects, such as the [South Jersey natural gas pipeline](#), which would have greatly increased the supply of energy to our electric grid. Instead, they bet big on Offshore Wind, and they lost.

Now, as a result of the lack of energy supply over the past several years, New Jersey is in an energy deficit. As you know, since you approved the rate hikes, ratepayers are now paying a lot more for power generation in 2025.



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Ultimately, these repeated rate hikes prove that New Jerseyans cannot afford this Energy Master Plan that prioritizes unrealistic green mandates and eliminates major energy sources. Moving forward, New Jersey needs an “all of the above” comprehensive energy plan that develops affordable energy sources and leads us toward energy independence.

Rather than continuing with another version of the current unrealistic and unaffordable Energy Master Plan, this Board should wait for the next gubernatorial Administration to set forth their own Energy Master Plan. New Jerseyans cannot afford another round of rate hikes due to expensive energy mandates.

Additionally, Jersey 1st also shares the concerns of the Taxpayers Protection Alliance regarding the City of Vineland in their desire to build an unnecessary and ineligible government-owned broadband network.

The City of Vineland is preparing to request grant funds from the BPU to build a government-owned broadband network. We agree that Vineland is ineligible for this money due to strict provisions in federal law. Additionally, a government-owned network is duplicative of private networks and therefore, it's completely unnecessary and a waste of taxpayer money. We hope you will prioritize ratepayers and reject this grant request.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. I hope you will keep affordability and the interest of ratepayers' as your highest priorities.

Sincerely,

Ashley Smith
Managing Director
Jersey 1st