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*Transcript of Verbal Testimony of Diane Sipe on behalf of The Better Path Coalition  
Wednesday, June 24, 2020, Testimony No. 21*

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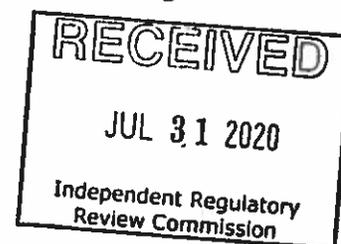
The Better Path Coalition is submitting the following comment on behalf of its members and the undersigned.

Shale gas development began in Pennsylvania 16 years ago. Little was understood about the activities involved or the wide range of risks peer-reviewed science has since identified. Over time, methane's roles as a major polluter and a significant contributor to global warming became well-understood. Particularly impactful are the methane leaks that occur at every phase of shale gas development and beyond when wells that are no longer active deteriorate for lack of maintenance.

Many environmental advocacy groups have been campaigning for years for methane regulations. Fracking was done in Pennsylvania for over 14 years before any rules were adopted and those only pertained to new wells. After more campaigning, the state is now considering rules for existing wells. Unfortunately, as the title of the proposed rulemaking states, the current round of rulemaking targets VOC emissions. Methane emissions are secondary. Methane is not even mentioned until page seven of the proposal.

Since shale gas development began in Pennsylvania, the need to address climate change by leaving fossil fuels in the ground has only become clearer and more urgent. The proposed rules have many flaws, but their major defect is that they say nothing about how they would serve only as a temporary, mitigating measure until the transition away from fossil fuels can be completed. The words and phrases 'transition,' 'renewable energy,' and 'alternative energy' do not appear in the proposal.

The proposal states on page 15 that "reducing methane leaks from oil and natural gas sources is essential to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and protecting public health." When Governor Wolf announced the rules on new wells in 2016, he said, "We are uniquely positioned to be a national leader in addressing climate change while supporting and ensuring responsible energy development, creating new jobs, and protecting public health and our environment." When this current proposal was announced, Governor Wolf said, "The new regulations will help identify and prevent leaks from existing wells and infrastructure, while protecting the environment, reducing climate change, and helping businesses reduce the waste of a valuable product." It is clear that the absence of references to a drawdown of methane production or the transition away from fossil fuels is not accidental. The proposed rules are not intended to be part of a plan to phase out fossil fuels. To the contrary, they are intended to put a happy face on continued and even expanded methane production. "Look, we've made fracking safe," is the dangerous, false, and unacceptable implication. Campaigners' time would have been better spent calling, as the Better Path Coalition does, for an outright ban on fracking.



We oppose the proposed rules because we believe they would only encourage more fracking, which would harm Pennsylvanians and take the state in the wrong direction on climate change. To borrow a metaphor Annie Leonard, Executive Director of Greenpeace, and Martin Bourque, Executive Director of the Ecology Center, used in an [op-ed](#) regarding plastics waste, when the bathtub is overflowing, what do you do first? Do you grab towels and start mopping up the water or do you turn off the tap? Our government has chosen a third option, a preposterous one, to turn up the pressure. What communities in the shale fields, on the paths of pipelines, and near the sites of the attendant infrastructure already know is that there simply aren't enough towels. We need to turn off the tap. We will not succeed in addressing the climate crisis if we do not stop producing greenhouse gases in Pennsylvania.