

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting us to share our views about the proposed installation of additional high-voltage power lines in southern York County.

My name is Dianne Creagh. I came to York County for a career in higher education. I have lived here for 11 years, serving as a history faculty member at Penn State York, and now as a program administrator and faculty member at York College. My program provides academic enrichment and support to new college students, to help them make a successful transition from high school. I am speaking here today as an advocate for college students from this area of York County—those who attend now, and those who will aspire to higher education in the future.

The decisions pending in this case will have a profound impact on the property values of homesteads and businesses in these rural communities. That impact, in turn, will significantly determine the ability of children who grow and learn here to progress in their education.

This project, if allowed to proceed, will undercut the value of farms, homes, and businesses as property is seized, landscapes are forever altered, and high-voltage lines deter new development and robust home sales for the foreseeable future. As property values decline, so, too, will the tax base that supports public schools in this area. As those schools face greater budget constraints, so too will the academic preparation of students who wish to continue their education beyond high school. And as families lose the hard-earned equity they have invested in their homes and businesses, so, too, will they lose the ability to send their students on to achieve their dream of a college degree.

As it is, higher education in Pennsylvania is just barely within the grasp of many rural York County families. Students already struggle to manage the sizeable gap between what college actually costs and what they and their families can afford. It is difficult enough for them now, working long hours outside of class, sometimes to help their parents pay the bills at home, all while accumulating staggering levels of student loan debt before they even declare a major.

Yet we know that achieving a college degree, uphill battle that it is, is a game changer for so many rural students and their families, as well as for York County. Many of these students will attend college at one of our local campuses, where they will become adult consumers supporting our local economy, where they will provide valuable labor as pre-professionals through internships and co-ops, where they will emerge as graduates to pursue their life's work in this area, raise their own families here, volunteer their time, and help their communities prosper. Even if their careers take them elsewhere, the local impact of their achievement will still be felt in their mentorship of younger siblings and support of older family members who still live here, in their home towns.

Undercutting property values here to benefit wealthier communities elsewhere is counterintuitive for the long-term health of this community. It will decimate the savings that some households have managed to accumulate, reduce the amount of home equity that might have helped to pay student tuition, drain the value of businesses that employ students, and force families to make difficult choices between helping their children build a future and just surviving the present. The sum total of these costs is frankly incalculable.

We all talk of how we value education. Who doesn't say that? But will we live our values when faced with competing interests? Will we choose to support our families and communities so they, in turn, can support their students? Or will we make short-sighted choices that put additional obstacles between tomorrow's generations and the educational opportunities they need to sustain and grow York County and south-central Pennsylvania?

Let us affirm our support of education by protecting the private property of York County citizens against the encroachment of corporate interests. Let us continue to feed the rising tide of innovation and growth that emanates from students in this community. That tide has the strength to lift all our boats, so long as it is not drained or diverted by those who wish to profit off of York County families while offering no comparable benefit in return.

Whenever education is at risk, the stakes are high. Thank you for your careful consideration of citizens' views in this case. I close by asking you to reject Transource's application.