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*Your Business Resource Partner*

Congressman Dan Meuser  
326 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Meuser:

The Northeast PA Manufacturers & Employers PA Association understands first-hand the importance of mine reclamation. The regional projects have helped prevent negative impacts to soil, water, and air resources in and near our mined areas.

As our nation prepares to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, we encourage you to consider the needs of communities impacted by the adverse impacts of abandoned mine lands (AML) and millions of tons of polluting coal refuse resulting from the legacy of this nation's mining industry. While AML and coal refuse piles are found in many states, they predominantly exist in financially stressed rural communities disproportionately burdened by mining's legacy. Unfortunately, the coal refuse reclamation-to-energy industry that provides much of the environmental remediation on these sites are at imminent risk of closure.

Coal refuse reclamation-to-energy facilities are also major economic engines and key employers in the struggling rural communities where they are located. The industry supports more than 3,000 jobs and contributes over \$615 million to the economy in Pennsylvania alone. These facilities were generally constructed with fixed price power purchase agreements and not designed to operate in today's failing wholesale energy markets. While the economic health of these facilities has been deteriorating over the past few years, the situation has recently gotten much more dire. The decline in electricity demand first due to a warm winter and now the coronavirus pandemic has temporarily shuttered most of the remaining coal refuse reclamation-to-energy plants – some may not reopen.

Nevertheless, these facilities play a pivotal role in cleaning up coal refuse piles but also address the associated air and water pollution in those disadvantages communities. Fresh air and clean water are vital to managing public health and safety as we deal with this novel coronavirus. There are currently over 5,000 abandoned coal mines across the country and millions of Americans live less than a mile from an abandoned coal mine. With cleaner water and air, the public health and safety of these communities will improve.

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The total amount of coal refuse pile remediation completed by the industry in Pennsylvania alone declined from over 8.5 million tons in 2018 to only 6.3 million tons in 2019 and that volume is likely to fall further this year. Two of these facilities permanently closed in 2020 and another plant is scheduled to decommission later this year if circumstances do not improve. Along with prior closures, that would be a total loss of 6 plants since 2018, thereby permitting continued pollution of our land, air and streams due to the lost reclamation previously performed by these facilities.

While generally treated as power plants, these units are more aptly considered environmental remediation facilities that partner with the government and private groups to clean up a public environmental problem. If we do not solidify this public-private partnership and preserve the plants' viability, this industry could disappear. The result – at least \$7 billion in government funded reclamation work to replace these facilities or, more likely, allowing hundreds of million tons of coal refuse to pollute our communities for years to come.

NEPA Manufacturers & Employers Association values the coal refuse reclamation-to-energy industry as a vital partner in the efforts to address the problems associated with coal refuse piles and AML sites. We therefore support the establishment of a federal tax credit to incentivize the reclamation of harmful coal refuse piles and urge Congress to include support for the coal refuse reclamation-to-energy industry in future legislation as you address economic stimulus and recovery from the coronavirus pandemic in struggling rural communities already impacted by the legacy of coal mining to restore our land, air and streams while providing an alternative source of energy and thousands of family-sustaining jobs.

Respectfully,

Darlene J. Robbins  
President  
NEPA Manufacturers & Employers Association

cc: Congressman Matt Cartwright  
Congresswoman Susan Wild  
Senator Pat Toomey  
Senator Bob Casey

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