



Hon. Michelle L. Phillips, Secretary
New York Public Service Commission
Three Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12223-1350

Subject: Case 26-E-0335 – Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to Implement a Nuclear Reliability Backbone.

Case 20-E-0197 - Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to Implement Transmission Planning Pursuant to the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act.

Case 15-E-0302 - Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to Implement a Large-Scale Renewable Program and a Clean Energy Standard.

Dear Secretary Phillips:

Steamfitters Local 638 represents nearly 9,000 highly-skilled and trained union workers who maintain jurisdiction of piping systems in the five boroughs and Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The members of 638 work in what is broadly-termed the 'energy sector.' They build and maintain heating and cooling systems in large buildings, they work in the powerhouses and peaker plants that supply energy to the grid, and they build clean energy infrastructure such as Thermal Energy Networks, biofuel facilities and hydrogen production and transportation systems. Our members are witnessing first-hand the energy crisis that is confronting New York and the particular effect it is having on the downstate grid, which has led to more-frequent power outages and compliance difficulties for owners and developers who are trying to build in New York City. The problem became particularly acute following the unnecessary closure of the Indian Point facility.

Nuclear power provides baseload carbon free energy that is firm and dispatchable at all times of the day and year. Solar, wind and battery storage have some usefulness, but cannot be developed at a scale and on a timeline that will meet New York's growing energy needs.

Local 638 commends the Administration and the Commission for acting to support the development of advanced nuclear energy as part of an "all-of-the-above" approach to safely and

reliably meeting the State's growing energy needs, advancing its clean energy goals, and delivering high-quality union jobs for New Yorkers. The Nuclear Reliability Backbone ("Backbone") process represents a generational investment in New York's energy system and its clean energy economy, and 638 recognizes the importance of developing firm, baseload power alongside continued investment in and deployment of other technologies that create good, union-paying jobs in the pipetrades. Whether that investment is delivered on time, on budget, and safely will depend in significant part on decisions the State makes now about workforce, labor standards, and structure of its own participation in these projects.

I. Union Labor is Foundational to New York's Existing Nuclear Fleet and to the Backbone

New York's existing nuclear fleet has benefited from the sustained work of a highly skilled union workforce. The State's four operating reactors —Nine Mile Point Unit 1 and 2, James A. Fitzpatrick, and R.E. Ginna – together produce approximately 27.5 terawatt hours (TWh) of electricity a year, accounting for more than 20% of New York's electricity generation and 40% of its carbon-free power.¹ These facilities have operated safely for decades, and they anchor the 3.4 GW of existing-fleet foundation on which the Backbone will be built.

II. The Backbone Process Requires a Deliberately Developed Workforce Pipeline

The scale of new deployment contemplated by the Backbone – 5 GW of new advanced nuclear generation in addition to the existing fleet – will require a workforce substantially larger than the one that exists today. Nationally, the overarching federal goal of quadrupling nuclear capacity over the next 25 years is projected to require a tripling of the nuclear workforce, according to the Department of Energy's Energy Workforce Advisory Board.²

Assembling a workforce of that size and skill requires significant planning, investment, and coordination in training. It depends on sustained investment in the registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs of the relevant trades, which are the mechanism through which the State can grow the diverse, productive, reliable, and highly trained workforce that safe nuclear construction and operation demand. This investment must begin well ahead of construction. The State's workforce planning, procurement, and financing decisions must therefore proceed in advance and on a coordinated timeline, so that job volumes and construction and operations schedules are communicated to the trades and other unions early enough for the workforce to be recruited and trained on the right timeline.

¹ ADVANCED NUCLEAR POLICY OPTIONS PAPER, NYSDERDA & DEP'T OF PUB. SERV. (2026).

² *Worker shortage looms over new US nuclear power focus*, ROLL CALL (Nov. 5, 2025), <https://rollcall.com/2025/11/05/worker-shortage-looms-over-new-us-nuclear-power-focus>; see also RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY ENERGY WORKFORCE ADVISORY BOARD, JULY 2025, U.S. DEP'T OF ENERGY (2025), https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/EWAB_Special_Report_Opportunities_for_American_Workers_in_Energy.pdf.

III. Project Labor Agreements Improve Cost, Schedule, Quality, and Safety Outcomes in Alignment with the State's Interests

Project labor agreements (PLAs) are well-suited to precisely these large, multi-trade, complex infrastructure projects that advanced nuclear power represents. A substantial body of research on the use of PLAs in construction associates them with cost savings, greater productivity, improved project quality, and higher worker safety – the very outcomes that allow complex projects like nuclear to be built at the scale and speed New York needs.³ By establishing wages, work rules, dispute-resolution mechanisms, and no-strike commitments in advance, PLAs reduce the risk of labor disruptions, jurisdictional disputes, and other workplace issues that can cause schedule delays, which are especially costly on a multi-year, multi-billion dollar nuclear build.

For projects where the State will bear a share of the financing – such as through the state equity, construction grants, debt finance, Advanced Nuclear Zero Emission Credits (ANZECs) – the schedule certainty, productivity, efficiency, and high-quality project completion benefits of PLAs are directly aligned with the State's own financial interest in on-time, on budget delivery. Where the State takes on financial exposure to the success of specific projects, a condition of that support should be the project's entry into a PLA. When the State acts as an owner, investor, or financier with financial exposure, the State is a "market participant" and can act to protect its proprietary interest in the specific projects through conditions that ensure efficient, successful project completion. New York has a significant interest in protecting its investments given that the future reliability of the grid to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective electric service for New Yorkers depends on adding gigawatts of baseload power.

IV. The State's Active Role Creates Opportunity to Engage Workforce Issues at the Outset

Local 638 agrees with the Options Paper: conventional, lowest-price Request for Proposals (RFP) process is likely ill-suited to the nuclear context. Competitive negotiation, on the other hand, makes sense, especially as it will allow for the adoption of workforce and labor standards from the outset."⁴ These considerations should be built into project structure and negotiated terms rather than considered as an afterthought. The State, acting through the appropriate combination of entities – NYSERDA, NYPA, the Department of Labor, and others – is well positioned to convene developers, engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) providers, suppliers, building trades, and other unions as early as possible, so that labor standards and workforce strategies are aligned with siting, financing, procurement, implementation, and supply

³ MICHAEL MCFADDEN ET AL. QUANTIFYING THE VALUE OF UNION LABOR IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS (2022), <https://www.mcaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/IPA-Study-Quantifying-the-Value-of-Union-Labor-in-Construction-Projects-FINAL.pdf>; see also FRANK MANZO IV ET AL., THE IMPACT OF UNIONS ON CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE HEALTH AND SAFETY: EVIDENCE FROM OSHA INSPECTIONS, ILL. ECON. POL'Y INST. (2021), <https://illinoisupdate.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ilepi-pmc-union-and-construction-health-and-safety-final.pdf>.

⁴ ADVANCED NUCLEAR POLICY OPTIONS PAPER, *supra* note 1, at 66.

chain decisions. This is particularly important given the lead time required to train and recruit the workforce through registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs on the correct timeframe.

V. Committed Pipeline of Mature, Proven Designs Can Maximize Both Cost Reduction and Workforce Development

While the skilled, union trades in New York can build any type of project, it is our understanding that selecting a proven, mature reactor design and committing to a pipeline of like units offers significant workforce and cost advantages. A committed pipeline of a single, mature technology provides certainty and clarity on the skills, occupations, and trades that a long-term buildout will require, which is precisely what enables effective, well-timed workforce investment.

A sustained pipeline is likely to achieve lower costs and a durable, well-defined career pathway for New York workers. We urge the Commission to ensure that any decisions on design and the selection and sequencing of technology are accompanied by strong workforce development programs suited to the complexities of this work and to the goal of high-quality, on-time production.

Thank you for your consideration.

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