

Prepared Testimony of

**Kathryn L. Zerfuss**

Commissioner Nominee  
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

Before the  
Pennsylvania Senate  
Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee

Presented: 10-18-2022

Thank you, Chairman Tomlinson, Chairwoman Boscola, and honorable members of the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee for your time and consideration today. I am Katie Zerfuss, and I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you as a nominee to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Governor Tom Wolf for the honor of this nomination. And I wish to thank and acknowledge my home Senator, Mike Regan.

I also would like to express my gratitude to all members of the Senate for taking the time to meet with me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you all in my new role; please know that my door is always open to you and your constituents.

I want to thank Commission staff for being kind and welcoming, and for their guidance through this process and, in advance, for their advice and counsel in the days, weeks, months and years to come as we work together on the pressing utility issues facing this Commonwealth.

I would like to express my appreciation to my family at home for all their support, understanding and unconditional love – they have endured long session nights, weekend budget negotiations and phone calls at dinner time. Even despite these sacrifices over the years, my husband, Andy, mother, Nancy, and children, Sydney, Ethan and Thea remain my biggest cheerleaders. I want them to know how much I love and appreciate them. I am equally grateful for my family in the Capitol. I am sitting here in this chair thanks to their friendship, encouragement and support over many years.

It is an interesting and perhaps non-traditional path that has taken me to this confirmation hearing. I grew up with very humble beginnings in Tamaqua, Schuylkill County, and became the first member of my immediate family to graduate college. In a case of PUC-related foreshadowing, my dad worked for Conrail before it became Norfolk Southern.

During my senior year in college, I served as a Bipartisan Management Committee Fellow in the state House of Representatives under the tutelage of former Representative Keith McCall. Representative McCall kept me on his staff part time until I graduated college. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Elizabethtown College, the House Democratic Policy Committee became my first job.

Coincidentally, my fellow nominee, Steve DeFrank, recruited me to work in the legislative office at the PA Gaming Control Board. I returned to the staff of Representative McCall when he became the House Majority Whip and then the Speaker of the House. Upon Speaker McCall's retirement, I became a research analyst for the House Finance Committee and then received a promotion to Executive Director.

I joined Governor Wolf's Administration at the very beginning of his term as a Deputy Legislative Director at the Department of Revenue. I was promoted to Legislative Director at the Department of Agriculture and then as Legislative Director at the Department of Transportation. I started working in the Governor's Executive Offices as a Deputy Secretary of Legislative Affairs at the beginning of his second term and manage the legislative offices of several state agencies (including Education, L&I, DCNR and Revenue). The PUC also is within my agency portfolio in the Governor's Office.

Some of the initiatives and contributions that I am the proudest of during my time in the Office of Governor Tom Wolf include:

- Establishing the PASmart initiative to meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.
- Developing the first-in-the-nation "It's On Us" laws to address sexual assault at postsecondary institutions.
- Securing Pennsylvania's first tax credit to help working families with childcare.

- Collaborating to establish a local resource manufacturing tax credit to foster fertilizer and petrochemical manufacturing -- creating jobs.
- Incentivizing economic growth and jobs through a new data center sales tax exemption.
- Securing a sales tax exemption for equipment to support breast feeding.
- Developing policy for tax-free federal public service student loan forgiveness.
- Drafting policy for universal free breakfast for public and private school students.

I offer these accomplishments and contributions as illustrations of my extensive and well-rounded background in public service, my desire to help people and my personal work ethic. I also wish to state the obvious: the accomplishments highlighted all relate to complicated issues that demanded input and consensus among diverse team members and stakeholders to solve.

Everything that I have done in my almost 20 years in Harrisburg has prepared me to become a Public Utility Commissioner and taught me something about the Commission's constituencies. While working at Revenue, I learned how the Gross Receipts Tax is applied to Pennsylvania's electric and telecommunications industry and about the Universal Service Fund. At PennDOT, I helped implement rail grants to fund railroads' various needs such as infrastructure improvements. Working with DEP, I understood how Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, or MS4, requirements impact local stormwater facilities, and my work with the Department of Agriculture helped me better understand how those MS4 requirements impact farmers.

I have good judgment, a fair and balanced approach, and an intellectual curiosity that drives me to seek out facts, research and find answers to questions. I always try to work in a transparent, bipartisan way to find a common solution for all. I respect the mission of the agency and will work tirelessly to learn the issues that impact individuals, families and businesses.

I understand and believe that I can balance the interests of large and small utility customers and the utilities who serve them. And I further understand that the General Assembly makes policy that is implemented by the PUC. Given my extensive legislative expertise, I stand ready to assist in reviewing and responding to legislative proposals, as appropriate.

I would like to reaffirm to the Governor, and to the committee, my commitment to fulfilling the duties of Commissioner with sincerity and integrity and honoring the mission of the agency if confirmed. I will endeavor to uphold the strong and important partnership that exists between your committee and the Public Utility Commission and will work to always be a resource to all members of the General Assembly, and your constituents. I am available to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.