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Statement of Peter Bradford

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Statement of Peter Bradford
California Diablo Canyon Workshop
August 12, 2022

My name is Peter Bradford. I am a former U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commissioner as well as former chair of the New York and Maine utility regulatory commissions. I have taught courses covering nuclear energy policy and utility regulatory law at Yale University and at Vermont Law School.

Though many people believe that operating an existing nuclear power plant provides a relatively inexpensive source of electricity, this is not the case. Aging reactors encounter inefficiencies, malfunctions and necessary investments that can render them neither cheap nor reliable. A dozen (of 104) US nuclear power plants – including San Onofre in California - have closed in the last eight years precisely because their output became too expensive to be sold in the power markets in which they operated.

France, often touted as the world's model nuclear nation, has in 2022 endured the near collapse of its aging nuclear fleet. Throughout Europe's Ukraine-driven energy crisis, about half of France's nuclear capacity has remained off-line for reasons related to the age of reactors that came online about when Diablo Canyon did. Indeed, France has had to buy power from countries like Germany that have carried out the closing and low carbon replacement of many nuclear reactors. French electric rates are now among Europe's highest.

In addition to the U.S. plants that have closed, a dozen more have required tens of billions of dollars in subsidies through consumer electric bills and in suppressed competition to stay open. The federal government is proposing tens of billions more from U.S. taxpayers. The legislation being proposed to keep Diablo Canyon open also contemplates massive subsidies to the plant, money that might well do more for the climate and for reliability if spent on the other low or zero carbon sources that are crowded out by extended commitments to take power from the uneconomic reactors. A crucial question unanswered during the workshop is whether the inevitably expensive continued operation of Diablo Canyon is really the least cost way to meet California's need for a reliable and a decarbonized electric system.

California has the capability to test the various ways available to meet its energy needs. It has been doing so while spending a lot of money to implement the Diablo Canyon settlement signed and approved several years ago. After extensive analysis, Diablo Canyon was expressly found not to offer the low-cost answer to California's energy future after 2025. Whether it has somehow morphed into that position can be tested again before the units close if need be, but it cannot be prudently tested in the hurried political cattle drive that passing sweeping subsidy and environmental suppression legislation without meaningful hearings or public input during August of 2022 would entail.