From: [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2026 10:23 PM
To: PUC-PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Public Comment – Docket EL26-008

Dear Commissioners:

As a South Dakota State Senator representing District 34 and a Rapid City resident, I am deeply concerned about Black Hills Energy's proposed electricity agreement with a company connected to CleanSpark's bitcoin-mining operation.

Rapid City families and small businesses are already struggling with rising electricity bills. Yet Black Hills Energy has negotiated a special agreement with a multibillion-dollar corporation that reportedly boasts some of the lowest electricity rates in its portfolio.

What makes this particularly troubling is that Rapid City residents have no choice of electricity provider. Black Hills Energy operates as a regulated monopoly, and we cannot simply take our business elsewhere when rates increase. That privilege should demand a HIGHER standard of transparency and accountability, not a lower one.

I am especially concerned that BHE initially sought to keep the entire agreement confidential indefinitely. While legitimate proprietary information deserves protection, the public has a right to know whether existing ratepayers could ultimately subsidize this operation or bear additional financial risks.

I respectfully request that the Commission withhold approval of this agreement until:

1. BHE demonstrates that residential and small-business customers will not bear additional costs or financial risks associated with this operation.
2. The Commission reviews the extensive confidentiality claims and requires disclosure of information that does not legitimately warrant protection.
3. Adequate financial guarantees are established to protect ratepayers if the company defaults, ceases operations, or leaves infrastructure costs behind.

I would also encourage coordination with Rapid City officials regarding the facility's potential impacts on nearby residential neighborhoods, particularly continuous industrial noise.

Economic development should not come at the expense of South Dakota families, especially, in this case, those who have no alternative electricity provider.

The public deserves transparency, and BHE's customers deserve assurance that their interests are being protected.

I urge the Commission to carefully scrutinize this agreement before granting approval.

Sincerely,

Taffy Howard
South Dakota State Senator, District 34
Rapid City, South Dakota

Sent from my iPhone