



March 17, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUCO Staff Validates OMA Findings: AEP Overstated Load Forecasts, Double Counted Data Center Growth

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) said new findings from Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) staff raise serious questions about the accuracy of AEP Ohio's load forecasting and reinforce what manufacturers have been warning for months: speculative data center growth can be overstated, double counted and used to influence regulatory decisions and push unjustified costs onto other customers.

In their review of AEP Ohio's proposed Basic Transmission Cost Rider (BTCR) rates, PUCO staff [found that the company's billing determinant forecast was "significantly overstated"](#) for the GS Non-Demand Secondary, GS Non-Demand Primary, GS Secondary and GS Primary classes, none of which include hyperscale data centers. Staff also found that projected data center load growth was counted multiple times, not only in the GS Transmission class, where most data center growth would be expected, but also in several other general service classes comprised of small businesses. The findings echo months of warnings from the OMA Energy Group.

OMA said the findings demonstrate serious forecasting errors by AEP and underscore the need for [robust oversight of utility load forecasts](#).

"PUCO staff just confirmed that AEP's forecasted electric load did not hold up in this critical filing," said Ryan Augsburger, president of the OMA. "The utility overstated load growth, counted projected data center demand multiple times and put forward numbers that shifted costs between customers while masking rising transmission costs unrelated to data centers. That is not disciplined planning. That is a warning sign."

OMA said the staff findings validate warnings that inflated utility forecasts are being used to manufacture urgency, win preferential treatment and push costs onto customers before the demand is real.

"This is exactly why manufacturers have been pushing for load forecast integrity," Augsburger said. "Speculative demand should not be treated like guaranteed load, and Ohio customers should not be forced to finance infrastructure and rates built on numbers that cannot withstand scrutiny."

The association said the staff report also aligns with concerns raised publicly by John Seryak, OMA energy engineer, who has argued that AEP repeatedly leaned on unvalidated and potentially inflated data center figures to create the impression of immediate need.

"AEP used big numbers to create urgency and push policy in its favor," Seryak said. "Now

commission staff have found that load growth was overstated and that projected data center demand was counted more than once. That should concern every customer paying into this system. Had this overstatement not been caught now, it could have been used to justify distribution rate increases under new forecasting rules.”

AEP’s [reply comments](#) made the outcome even more telling. Rather than defending its original figures, the company agreed to accept staff’s adjusted billing determinants and updated BPCR rates and agreed to file an interim update by July 15, 2026.

“AEP can spin this however it wants, but the bottom line is simple: staff found the forecasts were significantly overstated, and AEP accepted corrected numbers,” Augsburger said. “That is why Ohio lawmakers and regulators need to stop treating utility forecasts as gospel, especially when those forecasts can trigger real costs for manufacturers, families and other customers. The work is not done. This case shows the need for broader scrutiny.”

OMA said the case adds urgency to efforts to require independent verification and greater accountability in electric load forecasting as utilities push new policy and rate structures around projected data center growth.

“Paper demand is driving real-world consequences,” Augsburger said. “Ohio needs forecast accountability before more customers get stuck paying for a future that exists only in a utility spreadsheet.”

###

The Ohio Manufacturers' Association is Ohio's largest statewide business association composed solely of manufacturers. Established in 1910, the OMA's mission is to protect and grow Ohio manufacturing. It represents manufacturers of all sizes in every subsector of the industry. Manufacturing is Ohio's largest economic sector, employing approximately 690,000 Ohioans and contributing more than \$138 billion annually to the economy. Visit ohiomfg.com, or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

Dave O’Neil
Director, Communications and Marketing
(614) 629-6828
doneil@ohiomfg.com