

**BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

In the Matter of the Commission’s Review)
of Chapters 4901:1-17 and 4901:1-18 of the)
Ohio Administrative Code.) Case No. 19-52-AU-ORD
)

**INITIAL COMMENTS OF
DUKE ENERGY OHIO, INC.**

I. Introduction

Pursuant to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (Commission) Entry dated June 19, 2019, Duke Energy Ohio, Inc., (Duke Energy Ohio or Company) respectfully submits its comments regarding Ohio Administrative Code (O.A.C.) Chapters 17, 18 and 122, concerning the establishment of credit for residential utility service and the disconnection of residential utility service, and the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) Plus program.

II. Comments

A. O.A.C. 4901:1-17-04(B)- Deposit to reestablish creditworthiness.

The amendment to this provision changes the language to provide for requiring a deposit from the customer when the customer has not made full payment or payment arrangements for any two consecutive bills containing a past due balance. Duke Energy Ohio does not object to this change in general, but offers that this change will necessitate a change in the Company’s billing systems and will result in many more “midlife” deposits. If it is the goal of the Commission to increase the need for deposits, this change will accomplish that goal.

B. O.A.C. 4901:1-17-07 – Record of deposit.

Duke Energy Ohio currently retains records for three years and so supports this change to the rule.

C. O.A.C. 4901:1-18-05 – Extended payment plans and responsibilities.

Regarding part (A) of this rule, Duke Energy Ohio respectfully requests that the Commission add clarifying language regarding the phrase “reasonable extensions” that must be extended to the customer. Is it the Commission’s intent that a customer be advised of the availability of additional days to make payment, or that the customer be advised of multi-month payment plans that must be offered pursuant to part (B) of the rule? The Company’s current practice is to provide a customer with additional days to make a payment to extend the customer’s due date. If the offered arrangement is not satisfactory to the customer, the Company will then offer payment plans as required in Part (B). The Company seeks clarification as to whether or not a change in its practices is required.

D. O.A.C. 4901:1-18-06 – Disconnection procedures for electric, gas, and natural gas utilities.

The Commission’s proposed revisions to this rule state:

“Where a meter with remote reconnection capabilities is installed, no disconnections for non-payment shall be made after three-thirty p.m. on the day preceding a day on which all services necessary for the customer to arrange and the utility company to perform reconnection are not regularly performed.”

With regard to this proposed amendment, Duke Energy Ohio requests that the rule be clarified to ensure that the rule applies to meters that are installed and *certified* for service. To the

extent a customer has a newly installed smart meter that has not yet been certified, it may not be possible to comply with the rule in the interim.

In reference to 4901:1-18-06(B)(3), Duke Energy Ohio proposes including the language “60 days or two billing cycles.” This would allow utilities to make changes to current system functionality, instead of building new functions. This would also allow some flexibility since billing cycles and disconnection days can fluctuate. Duke Energy Ohio would also suggest that customers with meters that are deemed hard-to-access be excluded from this requirement, as this change will extend the time it takes to disconnect service. For combination gas and electric utilities, where the electric service has already been disconnected for non-payment and the gas meter is deemed hard to access, Duke Energy Ohio finds that typically customers have either moved from the location or are tampering. Duke Energy Ohio asks that these customers are excluded from being re-noticed.

In reference to 4901:1-18-06(C)(2)(e), Duke Energy Ohio proposes that additional restrictions be added to the required extended payment plans associated with a prior medical certificate. Duke Energy Ohio believes these extended payment plans’ default should be satisfied before the customer is eligible to use another medical certificate.

In reference to 4901:1-18-06(C)(2)(f), Duke Energy Ohio proposes decreasing the twenty-one calendar days for a customer to restore service using a medical certificate to ten calendar days.

In reference to 4901:1-18-06(C)(2)(g), Duke Energy Ohio requests clarifying verbiage that medical certificates are only processed by utility companies on scheduled work days and not on company holidays and weekends.

In reference to 4901:1-18-06(C)(2)(h), Duke Energy Ohio proposes limiting the use of medical certificates to twice in a twelve-month period.

E. O.A.C. 4901:1-18-12 – Percentage of income payment plan eligibility for gas utility service.

In reference to 4901:1-18-12(D)(3), Duke Energy Ohio notes that by removing the requirement to pay bill charges there is no longer a penalty for non-compliance of PIPP Plus rules. Duke Energy Ohio proposes simplifying PIPP Plus rules by removing voluntary removals and having one set of rules for all PIPP Plus re-enrolls/reinstates. Furthermore, Duke Energy Ohio proposes limiting the number of months customers are responsible to pay in order to re-enroll/reinstate in the program. Customers should not be responsible for installments over twelve months in order to re-enroll/reinstate on PIPP Plus. Once the customer exceeds the twelve-month period, they should be considered a new enrollment and their remaining arrears should be placed into their account balance, regardless if they maintained service, were disconnected, or utilized the Winter Reconnect Order. Duke Energy Ohio believes these additional limitations in conjunction with the proposed changes will benefit the customer and allows the customer to more easily rejoin the PIPP Plus program. Duke Energy Ohio recommends that this change take effect at system implementation for customers reinstating or re-enrolling in PIPP Plus going forward.

F. O.A.C. 4901:1-18-15 – General percentage of income payment plan provisions.

In reference to 4901:1-18-15(E) and (F), Duke Energy Ohio reiterates the comments stated in 4901:1-18-12(D)(3) above; these rules should be removed as they contradict the proposed changes on involuntary removals. Duke Energy Ohio suggests simplifying PIPP Plus rules by removing voluntary removals and having one set of rules for all PIPP Plus re-enrolls/reinstates.

III. Conclusion

Duke Energy Ohio respectfully submits the above comments regarding the rules in Chapters 17, 18 and 122, Ohio Administrative Code and thanks the Commission for inviting comments.

Respectfully submitted,

DUKE ENERGY OHIO, INC.

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