

FILE



# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## WIC DIVISION

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PUCO

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Dear PUCO,

10-15-08

Please reconsider carefully Ohio Power's plans(case 08-918-EL-SSO) to raise the cost of consumer electric bills by a total of 45% in the next three years. Allen County residents are already facing financially difficult times without such a large planned increase in our power bills. The decline of residents and the leaving of our children from Ohio, after college, reflects our declining economy and stability of our area. Viewing statistics of our area from the 2000 census most residents are employed in the service industries. The majority of residents are considered middle income but there are more people in the lower income categories than in the higher. The median income in 2000 for Allen County residents was 12.4% below the U.S.average!

With my work in the Allen County WIC program (WIC is a supplemental food and nutrition program which helps pregnant and breastfeeding moms, infants and children under 5 years of age with education, referrals and supplemental foods) we have seen a 26% increase in our potentially eligible, within the last five years. We are serving 30% more individuals monthly than just 5 years ago. Our income guidelines are 185% of the poverty level. Each WIC case involves a child or children who live in households that are struggling to make ends meet. The majority of our parents are working, either one or two in household works, with incomes that fail to help families make ends meet. Generations of families are living together to help make ends meet. Ohio Powers proposals to raise our electric bills by 45% would be detrimental to us all!

Ohio Power's proposals take into account the paying for coverage of power, for the very poor, by making the struggling families with a little, pay more to help them. The reality is that the low and middle income families, already struggling with debt and trying to make ends meet, will be asked to pay more with what? Who of us working or otherwise will receive a raise to make enough money... to cover the proposed astronomical increase in our power bills?

Please reconsider the sharpness of this proposed increase. Please consider the economy that we are in and how detrimental this will be to the families living in our area. Please help be a positive part of change in our area along with the upcoming change in the government. Hopefully, we will see better proposals to our economy and the wiser management and use of renewable and non renewable fuels by all. Please do not raise our bills by 45% in the next three years.

Thank you for the consideration in this matter.

Barb Deepe, MA, LD

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