BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Commission's Investigation of Ohio's Retail Electric Service Market.	)))	Case No. 12-3151-EL-ORD

COMMENTS OF
THE OMA ENERGY GROUP

I. INTRODUCTION

On December 12, 2012, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio ("Commission") issued an Entry requesting that all interested parties file comments regarding the Commission's investigation of Ohio's retail electric service market, on or before January 30, 2013. A subsequent Entry extended the deadline for interested parties to file initial comments by March 1, 2013. Pursuant to these entries, the OMA Energy Group ("OMAEG") submits the following comments.

II. COMMENTS

As an initial matter, the OMAEG respectfully requests the right to amend these initial comments based upon findings from an ongoing market study and analysis. The Commission's Entry seeks comments and reply comments regarding many topics related to the strength, health, and vitality of Ohio's retail electric service market. The scope of this review is very broad and its outcome could greatly affect Ohio's electric consumers, including Ohio's many manufacturers. Accordingly, a proper review of this scope necessarily requires technical analysis by a variety of subject-matter experts. However, the OMAEG offers the following comments regarding Ohio's retail electric service market, specifically addressing questions A, C, and L, as proposed by the Commission.

A. Does the existing retail electric service market design present barriers that prevent customers from obtaining, and suppliers from offering, benefits of a fully functional competitive retail electric service market? To what extent do barriers exist? Do they vary by customer class?

Ohio's manufacturers are robust participants in Ohio's retail electric service market. The table below shows the high level of customer switching from electric distribution utilities ("EDUs") to competitive retail electric service ("CRES") providers by commercial and industrial customers.[1] In order for customers to fully realize the benefits of a functional competitive retail electric service market, the OMAEG encourages the Commission to implement market designs that promote customer education and market transparency.

	Customer Switch Rates from EDUs to CRES Providers, by Customer Class		
EDU Territory	**Industrial**	**Commercial**	**Residential**
The Dayton Power and Light Co.	62.80%	42.41%	22.32%
Ohio Edison Co.	73.82%	76.90%	68.04%
Toledo Edison Co.	83.26%	77.99%	69.28%
Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co.	75.49%	79.10%	74.71%
Duke Energy Ohio	66.77%	48.14%	43.41%
AEP-Ohio	25.72%	22.81%	16.93%

Improvements to Ohio's certification process for CRES providers offers an excellent opportunity for the Commission to enhance customer education and market transparency. In part, the current certification process requires that applicants disclose whether a certification has been revoked or suspended, any past legal rulings against the applicant, and any pending legal actions against the applicant.[2] However, the current CRES certification process does not require applicants to disclose additional

[1]See The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, *Summary of Switch Rates from EDUs to CRES Providers in Terms of Customers for the Month Ending September 30, 2012*, http://www.puco.ohio.gov/emplibrary/files/util/MktMonitoringElecCustSwitchRates/SWITCH%20RATES%20CUSTOMER/2012/3Q2012.pdf (last visited February 22, 2013).
[2] O.A.C. 4901:1-24-05(B)(1)(f).

information about their interaction with consumers in other jurisdictions, such as notices of non-compliance provided by federal or other state public utility commissions. This additional information will help ensure that CRES providers are fully qualified and will be suitable to consumers as they participate in Ohio's competitive retail electric service market. Finally, there is a need for customer safeguards in order to monitor representatives of CRES providers, such as solicitors, who may not have the professional standards of a certified CRES provider.

Additional transparency can be achieved by making information about CRES providers' industry experience available to consumers. Ohio law requires entities seeking CRES certification to provide background information concerning the company's managerial, technical, and financial capabilities to provide the service. This information should be more readily available to the consumer. One potential solution is to link information about CRES providers' industry experience on the current "Apples to Apples" websites the Commission maintains. Each "Apples to Apples" website already lists the competitive suppliers within a utility service territory. Therefore, including a link to the application containing background information about the CRES provider's industry experience and capabilities would be easy to include in this list.

Another barrier is the lack of accountability between utilities and suppliers regarding customer information. Currently, utilities obtain and own customer data, so the onus is on the utility and supplier to inform the customer when there is an error. There should be recourse or accountability to utilities regarding the accuracy of customer information.

C. Should default service continue in its current form?

Predictable and stable energy pricing is critical for Ohio manufacturers to attract job-creating capital investment. Many of Ohio's manufacturers are in high electricity-intensive industries that annually spend two percent (2%) or more of their total expenditures on electricity. To the extent that a Standard Service Offer ("SSO") or some other form of default service enables a predictable and stable energy pricing option, the OMAEG recommends that it shall continue to play a valuable role in Ohio's competitive retail electric service market. A proper review of whether default service enables predictable and stable energy pricing necessarily requires technical analysis by a variety of subject-matter experts. As stated above, the OMAEG respectfully requests the right to amend these initial comments based upon findings from an ongoing market study and analysis.

L. Should the Commission consider standardized billing for electric utilities?

Yes, standardized billing would lead to more detailed and easier to understand electricity bills that include use data needed for shopping comparison. While some standardization will be helpful, it is important to not limit customer product selection of more complicated products. In other words, the bill should not drive product options. Product options need to be customer-driven.

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, the OMAEG respectfully requests that the Commission implement the OMAEG's recommendations.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of
THE OMA ENERGY GROUP

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of the foregoing Comments of the OMA Energy Group was served upon the parties listed below this 1st day of March 2013 *via* electronic mail.

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Summary: Comments electronically filed by J. Thomas Siwo on behalf of OMA Energy Group