## BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Commission's	)	
Review of Chapter 4901:1-25 of the	)	Case No. 21-478-EL-ORD
Ohio Administrative Code.	)	

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION REPLY COMMENTS BY OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio ("PUCO") invited interested stakeholders to provide comments on the rules concerning market monitoring by the PUCO – O.A.C. 4901:1-25. The rules the PUCO will review include those governing information that is provided to the PUCO about the electric generation wholesale markets by electric utilities, electric cooperatives, electric service companies, and government aggregators. The information about the electric generation wholesale markets can be important to consumers.

As we explained in our initial comments, making the information provided under these rules publicly available would help consumers make more informed decisions regarding their energy choices.<sup>2</sup> And as we also explained in our initial comments, the reported information should include "shadow billing." That is where the utility provides aggregate billing information about the difference between what consumers could have paid if they chose the utility's standard service offer ("SSO") and the prices charged by

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Three stakeholders did on January 7, 2021: OCC, AEP, and the Retail Energy Supply Association. AEP's comments were limited to a grammatical clarification. The Retail Energy Supply Association's comments were limited to the issue addressed herein.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See OCC's Initial Comments at 2-4 (January 7, 2022).

marketers. Shadow billing should be required and made public, for consumer protection against high prices charged by marketers.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the Retail Energy Supply Association would have the PUCO harm the public with *less* transparency and *less* information for consumers. RESA said that the PUCO "should also revise the reporting requirements to mandate annual rather than quarterly reporting for those competitive suppliers that remain under an obligation to file market reports."

For consumer protection, the PUCO should retain the quarterly reporting requirements, consistent with our advocacy for more transparency and more information for consumers. Quarterly reports (coupled with public filing the of reports) will provide consumers with better information. Better information could help consumers avoid wasting their hard-earned money on inflated marketer offers for energy, among other things.

As noted in OCC's comments, two reports showed that the greatest consumer benefit for saving money on energy choices came from the utilities' standard offers.<sup>5</sup> This result has been validated by the shadow billing performed by Columbia Gas, AEP and Duke (natural gas). Their data show that in the aggregate consumers lose money buying energy from marketers instead of from the utilities. To protect consumers, the PUCO

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Id.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> RESA Initial Comments at 1 (January 7, 2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> PUCO Electric Choice Activity for November 2021 link: https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZTliZDEzNGEtZjlhYi00YWEzLThjZjktMGZmNDg4OWE4ZD FkIiwidCI6IjUwZjhmY2M0LTk0ZDgtNGYwNy04NGViLTM2ZWQ1N2M3YzhhMiJ9; Thomas, Henning, Bowen, Hill and Kanter "Update on Electricity Customer Choice in Ohio: Competition Continues to Outperform Traditional Monopoly Regulation" August 9, 2019 at page 7.

should require energy utilities to publicly report and file shadow billing data when marketers are operating in their service areas.

Further, the PUCO should be annually reporting to the public information about how consumers fared (or could have fared) in the wholesale market as reflected in the utilities' standard offers. The people's state regulator, the PUCO, should not be a mere bystander as Ohioans lose money to marketers.

Properly functioning competitive markets with informed consumers result in benefits to Ohioans. The more detailed the public reporting of market information, the better for consumers.

Respectfully submitted,

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<u>/s/ William J. Michael</u>

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#### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a copy of this Consumer Protection Reply Comments was served on the persons stated below via electronic transmission, this 19th day of January 2022.

/s/ William J. Michael
William J. Michael
Assistant Consumers' Counsel

The PUCO's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document on the following parties:

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Summary: Comments Consumer Protection Reply Comments by Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel electronically filed by Ms. Alana M. Noward on behalf of Michael, William J.