



FAX

June 14, 2022

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
180 E Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Case No. 21-0637-GA-Air  
Case No. 21-0638-GA-Alt  
Case No. 21-0639-GA-UNC  
Case No. 21-0640-GA-AAM

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The Breathing Association (TBA) was established 115 years ago to help people who had contracted tuberculosis and then expanded to include other lung diseases. In 1988, TBA became the first agency to join public health and energy with health care services by providing air conditioners and electric utility vendor payments to households who were income eligible and had a family member with a lung health diagnosis.

In 2005, TBA expanded its summer only energy assistance program by opening a year-round HEAP program for eligible Franklin County residents. This program provides several services under its HEAP umbrella: The Winter Crisis Program (WCP), Summer Crisis Program (SCP), Percentage Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP Plus) and Regular HEAP. As a HEAP provider, we have worked with Columbia Gas to assist our mutual customers.

Columbia Gas supports its low-income customers by participating in the PIPP Plus (Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus) program which has been vital to helping those households maintain utility service at an affordable energy cost. PIPP Plus assists our most vulnerable customers. Columbia Gas was part of the partnership that developed and implemented the PIPP Plus rules in 2010 which reduced the cost of customer payments and also paved the way for customers to get from under utility debt. In the intervening years, Columbia Gas has helped to revise the PIPP Plus rules to assist customers and make the program sustainable. Columbia Gas's call center staff and management are very helpful and professional. They help to correct errors and assist customers. They are a pleasure to work with.

In addition to participating in the PIPP program, Columbia Gas supports its customers, by providing a grant to customers to help pay their bills once all other assistance has been used. The Columbia Gas Fuel Fund provides up to \$250 to help customers pay their gas bill and arrearages during the winter. This funding is available from January until it runs out. For the last two years it has lasted until May thanks to the increase federal funding due to COVID 19. In prior years, it has run out in February or March, leaving customers with the possibility of disconnection of service. TBA would advocate for more funding for the Columbia Gas Fuel Fund so that it would last until the end of the Special Reconnect Order, which is April 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

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Columbia Gas also participates in HEATSHARE which is a fuel fund administered by the Salvation Army and is funded by customer, employee and stakeholder donations. This funding has assisted many customers in paying arrearages with then stops disconnections and pays the PIPP Plus default amounts which lets the customer re-enroll on PIPP Plus. Columbia's continuing support of the Heashare program is critical to assisting customers who have exhausted all other sources of funds to assist them with payment of their heating bills.

Columbia Gas also helps its low-income customers reduce their energy usage and make their homes warmer with it WarmChoice Program. This program provides a no cost home energy and efficiency inspection and weatherization services. It replaces furnaces and repairs leaks and other dangerous situations related to natural gas heat. The program partners with the federal Weatherization Assistance Program to allow more customers to benefit from a warm, comfortable home.

Columbia Gas is also a great community partner. Current and former staff sit on TBA's board. Their expertise and knowledge have helped us to become a stronger, more efficient, and more self-sufficient non-profit organization. It has also contributed to our Mobile Medical Unit that takes lung health care to our customers where they live. The funding has made it possible for us to the unit on the road serving patients.

In addition to serving on our board, Columbia Gas staff attend our events to highlight our programs to the community. They meet with our customers and provide assistance and information to them.

We applaud Columbia Gas for its continued support of low-income customer programs and the mission. TBA is in full support of a modest rate increase to the extent that it is necessary that Columbia has the funding available to allow them to continue to provide this much needed support.

Sincerely,



Ed Frantz  
Board Chair  
The Breathing Association



Lori Sontag  
President and CEO  
The Breathing Association