

**BEFORE  
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

In the Matter of the Application of )  
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Authority ) Case No. 21-637-GA-AIR  
to Amend its Filed Tariffs to Increase the )  
Rates and Charges for Gas Services and )  
Related Matters. )

In the Matter of the Application of )  
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval ) Case No. 21-638-GA-ALT  
of an Alternative Form of Regulation. )

In the Matter of the Application of )  
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval ) Case No. 21-639-GA-UNC  
of a Demand Side Management Program )  
for its Residential and Commercial )  
Customers. )

In the Matter of the Application of )  
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval ) Case No. 21-640-GA-AAM  
to Change Accounting Methods. )

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**MOTION PURSUANT TO O.R.C. 4903.083 FOR A LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING  
IN TOLEDO, OHIO ON COLUMBIA’S PROPOSED RATE INCREASE  
BY  
OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS’ COUNSEL**

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The PUCO has held local public hearings regarding Columbia’s proposed \$212 million rate increase. But as yet no local public hearing has been scheduled for Toledo, Ohio. R.C. 4903.083, a reform law enacted decades ago, requires that in rate cases the PUCO “shall hold public hearings in each municipal corporation in the affected service area having a population in excess of one hundred thousand persons....” Toledo has a population in excess of 100,000, so a local hearing is required for people in Toledo to

testify about Columbia's rate increase proposal.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Toledo's population has a poverty rate of over 25%.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for this motion are explained more fully in the attached memorandum in support.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Weston (0016973)  
Ohio Consumers' Counsel

*/s/ Angela D. O'Brien*  
Angela D. O'Brien (0097579)  
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<sup>1</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/toledo-oh-population>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

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**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**

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In distribution utility rate cases, R.C. 4903.083 requires the PUCO to hold at least one local public hearing in each city within the affected service area with a population of at least 100,000. Other locations are optional for local public hearings. To date, local public hearings have been held in Athens, Bowling Green, Canton, Columbus, and Zanesville. The law’s requirement allows consumers an opportunity to directly interact with the PUCO and share their opinions publicly regarding the utility’s proposal.

Here, the opportunity for consumers to be heard is particularly important, given that Columbia has asked for a \$212 million rate increase. Among other concerns for consumers, Columbia’s proposal will dramatically increase the monthly fixed charges residential consumers will be charged before using any gas at all. Columbia’s proposal is

for \$46.31 (up from \$16.75) monthly now and then an increase to \$80 per month at the end of five years.

In addition, OCC previously filed a motion for the PUCO to hold a virtual local public hearing, where consumers who have concerns about attending public gatherings in person can testify regarding Columbia's proposal.<sup>3</sup> But the PUCO has not yet ruled on OCC's request.

Providing the statutorily required local public hearing to consumers in Toledo is also important given the high rates of poverty in the Toledo area. As noted above, the poverty rate in Toledo is more than 25%. And the food insecurity rate for Lucas County was 21.2% as of 2020.<sup>4</sup> Children in Toledo face higher food insecurity rates.<sup>5</sup>

For the reasons set forth herein, OCC respectfully requests that the PUCO grant this motion.

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<sup>3</sup> Motion to Allow Columbia's Consumers to Participate Virtually in the PUCO's Local Public Hearings on Columbia's Proposed Rate Increase and Request for Expedited Ruling by Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (May 20, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> <https://doingbetterintoledo.com/blog/hunger-in-toledo>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Weston (0016973)  
Ohio Consumers' Counsel

/s/ Angela D. O'Brien  
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## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a copy of this Motion was served on the persons stated below via electronic transmission, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of September 2022.

/s/ Angela D. O'Brien  
Angela D. O'Brien  
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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**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities  
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**9/1/2022 4:45:01 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 21-0637-GA-AIR, 21-0638-GA-ALT, 21-0639-GA-UNC, 21-0640-GA-  
AAM**

Summary: Motion Motion Pursuant to O.R.C. 4903.083 for a Local Public Hearing  
in Toledo, Ohio on Columbia's Proposed Rate Increase by Office of the Ohio  
Consumers' Counsel electronically filed by Mrs. Tracy J. Greene on behalf of  
O'Brien, Angela D