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From: Greg Leimeister <gleime@sssnet.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 15, 2023 3:28 PM
To: Puco Docketing <docketing@puco.ohio.gov>
Subject: Public Comment for Case Nos. 21-637-GA-AIR; 21-638-GA-ALT; 21-639-GA-UNC; 21-640-GA-AAM

Commissioners,

I urge you to deny Columbia Gas of Ohio’s proposed stipulation at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). The stipulation eliminates critical energy efficiency programs, creates a huge energy burden for ratepayers, and overall hurts consumers across Columbia Gas of Ohio’s service area.

If approved, the proposed stipulation would reflect an increase in fixed rates from \$37 to as much as \$58 a month for residential ratepayers over a five-year period. Not only would this result in more than a 50% increase in base monthly charges—unrelated to the costs associated with actual natural gas usage in a household—this fixed rate increase would also eliminate incentives for high-income households to reduce consumption. This proposed price hike comes at a time when natural gas prices are already skyrocketing, adding further burden onto consumers. The proposed increase in fixed rates disproportionately harms poor and low to moderate income families, communities of color, people with disabilities, and other groups that are historically under-resourced, ignored, and bear the brunt of injustices in our energy system.

Columbia Gas of Ohio has acknowledged that its energy efficiency programs help customers control their rising bills, but the company drastically scaled them back to get a settlement in this case. Energy efficiency programs provide a dual benefit of keeping prices low, and providing crucial environmental benefits. By cutting these critical programs, consumers are left with even fewer options for reducing their bill based on usage.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio must act to protect consumers by denying this stipulation proposed by Columbia Gas of Ohio. The stipulation presents numerous energy justice concerns and ultimately does not benefit consumers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Greg Leimeister
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