

**BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

In the Matter of the Application of Duke	:	
Energy Ohio Inc., for an Increase in Natural	:	
Gas Rates.	:	Case No. 22-0507-GA-AIR
	:	
	:	
In the Matter of the Application of Duke	:	
Energy Ohio Inc., for Approval of an	:	Case No. 22-0508-GA-ALT
Alternative Form of Regulation.	:	
	:	
	:	
In the Matter of the Application of Duke	:	
Energy Ohio Inc., for Tariff Approval.	:	Case No. 22-0509-GA-ATA
	:	
	:	
In the Matter of the Application of Duke	:	
Energy Ohio Inc., for Approval to Change	:	Case No. 22-0510-GA-AAM
Accounting Methods.	:	
	:	

**PREFILED TESTIMONY IN RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS TO
THE STAFF REPORT
OF**

JAMES T. RIPKE

**RATES AND ANALYSIS DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

STAFF EXHIBIT ____

May 17, 2023

1 1. Q. Please state your name and business address.

2 A. My name is James (Jim) Ripke and my business address is 180 East Broad
3 Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.
4

5 2. Q. By whom and in what capacity are you employed?

6 A. I am employed by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO or
7 Commission) as a Utility Specialist in the Rates and Analysis Department.
8

9 3. Q. Please briefly describe your educational and professional background.

10 A. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree from The Ohio State University. I
11 received a Bachelor of Science degree from Franklin University.
12

13 I have been employed with the PUCO since 1999. I initially started in the
14 Service Monitoring and Enforcement Division's (SMED) call center,
15 receiving complaints on utility company practices and services. As a
16 Customer Service Investigator, I would liaison with utility company
17 representatives in an attempt resolve issues brought by consumers.
18

19 In 2010, I was promoted to Utility Specialist 1, where a majority of work
20 assignments pertain to natural gas companies. My primary focus of
21 responsibility is the Demand Side Management (DSM) programs of
22 Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc., (Columbia or Company), Vectren Energy

1 Delivery of Ohio, Inc. d/b/a CenterPoint Energy Ohio (CenterPoint), and The
2 East Ohio Gas Company d/b/a Dominion Energy Ohio.

3
4 My work includes reviewing applications for renewal, changes in rider rates,
5 and auditing program spending.

6
7 4. Q. What is the purpose of your testimony in this proceeding?

8 A. The purpose of my testimony is to address objections raised regarding the
9 low-income weatherization funding program in Duke Energy Ohio, Inc's.
10 (Duke or Company) distribution rate case. Specifically, I address Ohio
11 Consumers' Counsel (OCC) Objections 18, 19, 20, and 21.

12
13 5. Q. OCC Objection 18 objects that a recommendation was not made by Staff to
14 transfer \$1,795,000 in base rate funding for low-income weatherization
15 programs to a rider. How do you respond?

16 A. As part of the Stipulation filed on April 28, 2023, it was agreed that
17 \$1,795,000 is to be collected through base rates for a low-income
18 weatherization program under an agreement between Duke and People
19 Working Cooperatively (PWC). This is a continuation of a previously
20 established amount last approved in Case No. 12-1685-GA-AIR. Additional
21 companies including Dominion East Ohio Energy and CenterPoint Energy
22 also maintain a level of low-income funding for weatherization programs in

1 their base rates.

2
3 6. Q. OCC Objection 19 objects that the Staff Report did not address shareholder
4 contributions to low-income weatherization programs. How do you respond?

5 A. Objection 19 has been addressed within the Stipulation filed on April 28,
6 2023. Duke has agreed to provide \$200,000 in shareholder funds in
7 contributions per year to be used to support low-income weatherization in
8 the Company's service territory. This shareholder funding commitment will
9 be effective January 1, 2024.

10
11 7. Q. In Objection 20, OCC objects that Staff did not recommend an annual
12 PUCO Staff review and audit of the low-income weatherization program.
13 Do you agree?

14 A. No. As part of the overall Stipulation, Staff believes the low-income
15 weatherization program is reasonable and should continue to be included in
16 the company's base rates. As part of the review, Staff evaluated the proposed
17 budget included in the low-income program base rates and did not find it to
18 be unreasonable.

19
20 8. Q. In Objection 21, OCC objects that Staff did not clarify ineligible expenses
21 for the low-income weatherization program. How do you respond?

22 A. Staff has determined that the \$1,795,000 proposed by the Company to be

1 used for low-income weatherization is reasonable to be included in base
2 rates. Staff notes the low-income weatherization program funding is
3 consistent with the low-income weatherization program funding in previous
4 years and that was included in base rates in Case No. 12-1685-GA-AIR.
5 While Staff did review the application and exhibits that correspond to the
6 low-income weatherization program funding, Staff did not evaluate the very
7 specific expenses that OCC has identified in Objection No. 21.

8 9. Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

9 A. Yes. However, I reserve the right to submit supplemental testimony as new
10 information subsequently becomes available or in response to positions taken
11 by other parties.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a true and correct copy of the **Prefiled Testimony in Response to Objections to The Staff Report of James T. Ripke, Rates and Analysis Department, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio** has been served upon the below-named counsel via electronic mail, this 17th day of May 2023.

//s/ Robert Eubanks

Robert Eubanks

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Summary: Testimony Prefiled Testimony in Response to Objections to The Staff Report of James T. Ripke, Rates and Analysis Department, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio electronically filed by Mrs. Kimberly M. Naeder on behalf of PUCO.