



Andrew S. Tubbs
Senior Counsel
Legal Department

800 N. Third Street, Suite 204
Harrisburg, PA 17102
Office: 717.238.0684
astubbs@nisource.com

March 1, 2015

Via E-filing

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**RE: COMMENTS OF COLUMBIA GAS OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.
TO TENTATIVE ORDER ON ACT 155/CHAPTER 14
IMPLEMENTATION
Docket No. M-2014-2448824**

Dear Ms. Chiavetta:

Enclosed for filing are the Comments of Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. in response to the January 15, 2015 Tentative Order issued in the above-captioned matter.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (717) 238-0684. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew S. Tubbs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew S. Tubbs

/kak

Enclosure

Cc: all parties (w/enc.)

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Act 155 of 2014 (Chapter 14) : Docket No. M-2014-2448824
Implementation :

**COMMENTS OF COLUMBIA GAS OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.
TO TENTATIVE ORDER ON ACT 155/CHAPTER 14 IMPLEMENTATION**

I. INTRODUCTION

On January 15, 2015, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) entered a Tentative Order seeking comments on implementing Act 155 of 2014 (“Act 155”), which reauthorized and amended Chapter 14 of the Public Utility Code (66 Pa. C.S. §§ 1401-1419). Chapter 14 establishes rules and provides protections to responsible bill paying customers by providing public utilities, like Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (“Columbia”), with mechanisms and procedures to timely collect amounts owed by customers for service, while protecting vulnerable customers by ensuring they have the opportunity to maintain utility service on reasonable terms and conditions.

The amendments to Chapter 14 contained in Act 155 supersede a number of the Commission’s existing regulations found in Chapter 56, thus requiring the Commission to promulgate a rulemaking to revise Chapter 56. However, the Commission correctly identified the need to provide immediate guidance as to its plan to implement and interpret some areas addressed in Act 155 in advance of initiating the formal rulemaking

process on certain matters. Specifically, the Commission identified two issues requiring immediate guidance:

1. Section 1403, Definition of Medical Certificate: The Commission is approving the “form” that a medical certificate must take.
2. Section 1410.1(3) and (4): Utility reporting requirements concerning accounts with arrearages in excess of \$10,000.00 and annual reporting of medical certificate usage.

Columbia appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the important issues identified in the Commission’s Tentative Order, and it looks forward to working with the Commission and other interested parties in implementing Act 155.¹

II. COMMENTS

a. Section 1403, Definition of Medical Certificate

Columbia agrees with the Commission that Act 155 provides that the Commission is to approve the “form” of medical certificate to be used by customers and utilities to certify that a customer or a member of a customer’s household is seriously ill or has been diagnosed with a medical condition necessitating the continuation of service to treat the condition. Columbia is presently using a medical certificate form that was approved by the Commission. As discussed below, Columbia requests the Commission approve Columbia’s existing medical certificate form, as amended to respond to the requirements of Act 155.

¹ In addition, Columbia supports the vast majority of the comments filed by the Energy Association of Pennsylvania.

Section 56.113 of the Commission's existing regulations set forth the requirements for medical certifications in Pennsylvania. Specifically, Section 56.113 provides:

Certifications initially may be written or oral, subject to the right of the public utility to verify the certification by calling the physician or nurse practitioner or to require written verification within 7 days. Certifications, whether written or oral, must include the following:

- (1) The name and address of the customer or applicant in whose name the account is registered.
- (2) The name and address of the afflicted person and relationship to the customer or applicant.
- (3) The nature and anticipated length of the affliction.
- (4) The specific reason for which the service is required.
- (5) The name, office address and telephone number of the certifying physician or nurse practitioner

52 Pa. Code § 56.113.

It is Columbia's position that the information currently required to be provided by medical professionals pursuant to Section 56.113 is adequate to fulfill the requirements of Act 155. Indeed, Columbia presently accepts medical certificates both verbally or in writing from a physician, nurse practitioner or a physician's assistant. However, to further ensure the validity of these requests, Columbia suggests that the Commission require that the physician, nurse practitioner or a physician's assistant also provide their Pennsylvania registered license number(s) when certifying the medical condition of the customer or occupant and that this requirement be added to the form. Columbia respectfully requests that the Commission approve Columbia's proposed form of medical certificate, which is attached as Exhibit A to these comments.

b. Section 1410.1(3): Utility Reporting Requirements re: Accounts Exceeding \$10,000.00 in Arrearages

Section 1410.1(3) requires utilities to annually report to the Commission the number of residential customer accounts which have accumulated arrearages of \$10,000.00 or more. 66 Pa. C.S. § 1410.1(3). In its Tentative Order, the Commission seeks comment on: (1) whether Act 155 requires utilities to report specific customer account information rather than in the aggregate; (2) the timing and methodology of the annual report; and (3) the specific data points to be included in the annual utility reports to the Commission as well as the format of the report. Columbia offers the following comments on these areas:

- Customer specific or Aggregate Data: It is Columbia's position that the intent of Act 155 was for utilities to provide specific customer data on those accounts with arrearages in excess of \$10,000.00. However, as discussed below, Columbia supports the Commission implementing reporting measures to protect sensitive customer information from release.
- Timing and Methodology: Columbia supports the Commission's recommendation to provide an annual "snapshot" of those accounts who have reached the \$10,000 threshold or more. Columbia suggests that the process date (snapshot) of the report be December 31st of each year, beginning year end 2015.
- Timing and Methodology: Columbia recommends that the utilities' annual reports only identify those residential accounts which are active as of the

December 31st “snapshot.” In addition, the report should exclude the following type of accounts:

- Those residential customers presently participating in a utility’s Customer Assistance Program (CAP) that may have a pre-program arrearage of \$10,000.00 or more; and
- Those accounts which are not subject to residential collection treatment pursuant to Chapter 56 – landlord/tenant situations. As these accounts are not “residential” in nature, they are not subject to the new reporting requirement. However, Columbia would support a Commission sponsored review of these accounts and the difficulties associated with timely arrearage collection.
- Timing and Methodology: To coincide with the Commission’s annual collections reporting requirements in Section 56.231, Columbia recommends that the annual report required by Section 1410.1(3) be filed simultaneously with the utilities’ 56.231 Annual Report. See 52 Pa. Code § 56.231. Therefore, utilities would file both the 56.231 Annual Report and 1410.1(3) Report on April 1st of each year, beginning in 2016.
- Timing and Methodology: Due to the potential for a large quantity of information needing to be tracked and submitted, the timeframe for review of the supporting documentation on the accumulation of these arrearages should be limited to the most recent four year period.
- Data Points: There are several data elements that need to be included in the confidential report to be filed with the Commission in order to provide a full overview of the identified accounts and how the arrearage

accumulated, as well, data elements which may identify other causes that may have impeded a utility's ability to pursue timely collection efforts. Columbia has identified the following data elements it believes should be included in the report:

- 1) Customer Name (Specific Identifier)
- 2) Account Number (Blocked)
- 3) Amount in Arrears
- 4) Number of Payments in the last 24 months
- 5) Number of Energy Assistance Payments in the last 24 months
- 6) Number of months in arrears
- 7) Prior Participant in CAP (Y or N)
- 8) Balance when removed from CAP
- 9) Customer's current income level
- 10) Number of Company Pay Plans
- 11) Number of Commission Pay Plans/BCS Case Number
- 12) Number of Disputes (Ch 56.151-152) filed in the last 24 months.
- 13) Number of Medical Certificates Filed
- 14) Number of NSF Checks or use of an Invalid Credit Card
- 15) Number of Times the Customer Filed Bankruptcy
- 16) Dollars Owed and Associated with Bankruptcy
- 17) Number of Times Customer Reported a Change in Income (CII)
- 18) Number of 10 day Notices Issued in last 24 months
- 19) Number of Times the Customer was Shut-off For Non-Payment
- 20) Date of Last Shut-off
- 21) Miscellaneous

- Private Customer Information: Due to the sensitivity of the customer information utilities collect, it is essential that any specific personal customer information not be compromised. Specifically, it is imperative to restrict release of a customer's name, address, account number, historical billing data and customer's telephone number. Restricting release of this information comports with Section 62.78 of the Commission's regulations. 52 Pa. Code § 62.78. However, Columbia maintains that utilities are able to file the requisite data needed to comply with Act 155, in a format that does not release this data can be achieved. Indeed, in order to properly

protect the utilities' customer information and provide the Commission with the information it needs to evaluate these accounts, Columbia proposes to file both a public and confidential version of the report with the requisite residential customer account data but without providing the customer information protected by Section 62.78 of the Commission's regulations. The confidential report would contain all the data points identified above, but would identify customers by a specific identifier (i.e., "Customer A"). The public version of the report would provide the information in the aggregate – total number of accounts in arrears in excess of \$10,000 and the total amount owed on these accounts. The public report could also include additional non-sensitive information relative to these accounts, reported in aggregate form.

Again, Columbia supports an annual filing due on April 1st, which provides the Commission with customer specific data as of December 31st on active residential accounts that have an arrearage of \$10,000 or more. However, in order to protect the privacy of these customers, it is Columbia's position that this information should be filed in the manner outlined above.

c. Section 1410(4): Utility Reporting Requirements re: Medical Certificates

Section 1410.1(4) requires that utilities annually report to the Commission the "number of medical certificates and renewals submitted and accepted in the service territory." 66 Pa. C.S. § 1410.1(4). To comply with this new reporting requirement, Columbia recommends that utilities submit information relative to the number of medical certificates offered and accepted by the company be reported annually, as part

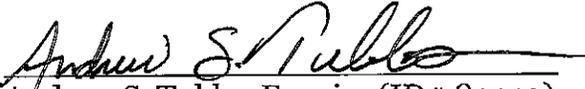
of the Section 56.231 (Annual Report) due to the Commission on April 1st, of each year, beginning in 2016.

In reviewing the Commission's Tentative Order, Columbia notes that the Commission uses wording interchangeably to describe medical certificates that are submitted, offered, and accepted. To simplify this process, Columbia recommends that medical certificate reporting be limited to medical certificates "requested" and "accepted." By identifying the certificates in this manner, the utility would be able to capture all medical certificate "requests", where the company places a 3-day delay on the account. Similarly, it would capture those medical certificate requests that were denied for any reason, as well as those "accepted" and validated by the physician, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant as required by Section 56.113 of the Commission's regulations. In addition, Columbia recommends that utilities report data in the same manner for both initial and renewal medical certificate requests as described above.

III. CONCLUSION

Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. respectfully requests that the Commission consider the Comments submitted herein when considering the issuance of a Final Order on implementing Act 155.

Respectfully submitted,


Andrew S. Tubbs, Esquire (ID# 80310)
NiSource Corporate Services Company
800 North Third Street, Suite 204
Harrisburg, PA 17102
Phone: 717-238-0463
E-mail: astubbs@nisource.com

Date: March 2, 2015

Attorney for Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION NOTICE

Date Notice Mailed _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY CUSTOMER:

Name of Customer _____	Name of Person with Serious Illness or Medical Condition _____
Service Address _____ _____	(Please Print Name)
Telephone No. _____	
Account No. _____	

GAS SERVICE MAY BE TERMINATED AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS WITHIN SEVEN (7) DAYS OF THE ABOVE MAILING DATE, UNLESS THIS NOTICE IS COMPLETED AND SIGNED BY A PHYSICIAN, NURSE PRACTITIONER, OR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT, AND RETURNED TO COLUMBIA GAS.

TO BE COMPLETED BY PHYSICIAN, NURSE PRACTITIONER, OR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT:

TO THE PHYSICIAN, NURSE PRACTITIONER (NP), OR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT(PA):	
I CERTIFY THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON IS SERIOUSLY ILL OR IS AFFLICTED WITH A MEDICAL CONDITION WHICH WILL BE AGGRAVATED BY THE ABSENCE OF GAS SERVICE.	
NAME OF AFFLICTED INDIVIDUAL _____	
RELATIONSHIP TO CUSTOMER _____	
NATURE OF ILLNESS _____	
EXPECTED DURATION OF ILLNESS _____	
REASON WHY GAS SERVICE IS REQUIRED _____	
Physician/NP/PA Signature _____	License Number: _____
Print Name _____	
Office Address _____ _____	
Office Phone _____	Date Submitted _____

IMPORTANT

THIS MEDICAL CERTIFICATION SHALL NOT EXCEED THIRTY (30) DAYS UNLESS UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT ITS RENEWAL BY A PHYSICIAN, NURSE PRACTITIONER, OR PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT.

THE RATEPAYER STILL HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE A REASONABLE PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT AND PAYMENT ON ALL CURRENT UNDISPUTED BILLS OWED TO THE UTILITY.