

Pursuant to the provisions of the Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (“PUC” or “Commission”), 52 Pa. Code §§ 5.61-5.76, the Coalition for Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania (“CAUSE-PA”), through its counsel at the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, hereby petitions the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) to intervene in the above-captioned proceeding. In support thereof, CAUSE-PA states as follows:

1. On March 18, 2016, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania (“Columbia”) submitted a rate filing, Supplement No. 241 to its Tariff Gas PA PUC No. 9, which proposes to increase rates by approximately \$55.3 million per year, or 11.23%. According to Columbia’s calculations, its proposal would increase the total bill for a residential customer who uses 70 therms of gas from \$77.33 to \$86.97 per month, an increase of 12.47%.

Petition to Intervene

2. Eligibility to intervene in Commission proceedings is governed by 52 Pa. Code § 5.72, which provides in relevant part that “[a] petition to intervene may be filed by a person claiming a right to intervene or an interest of such nature that intervention is necessary or appropriate to the administration of the statute under which the proceeding is brought.” 52 Pa. Code § 5.72(a).

3. Section 5.72 further provides that the right or interest may be one “which may be directly affected and which is not adequately represented by existing participants, and as to which the petitioner may be bound by the action of the Commission in the proceeding.” 52 Pa. Code. § 5.72(a)(2).

4. Even though Section 5.72 speaks of the rights of a “person” to intervene, the Commonwealth Court has consistently stated that “an association may have standing as a

representative of its members ... as long as an organization has at least one member who has or will suffer a direct, immediate, and substantial injury to an interest as a result of the challenged action, [i.e., is aggrieved, the organization] has standing.” *Energy Cons. Council of Pa. v. Pa. P.U. C.*, 995 A.2d 465, 476 (Pa. Commw. 2010) (alteration in original) (citing *Tripps Park v. Pa. P.U. C.*, 415 A.2d 967 (Pa. Commw. 1980); *Parents United for Better Schools v. School District of Philadelphia*, 646 A.2d 689 (Pa. Commw. 1994)).

5. CAUSE-PA is an unincorporated association of low-income individuals that advocates on behalf of its members to enable consumers of limited economic means to connect to and maintain affordable water, electric, heating and telecommunication services.

6. CAUSE-PA membership is open to moderate and low- income individuals residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who are committed to the goal of helping low-income families maintain affordable access to utility services and achieve economic independence.

7. CAUSE-PA is located, c/o the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, at 118 Locust Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101.

8. CAUSE-PA has a significant interest in the impact that Columbia’s proposed rate increase will have on moderate and low income residential customers. These interests are not adequately represented by other participants.

9. Several members of CAUSE-PA are located within Columbia’s service territory and will be directly affected by the outcome of this proceeding. Particularly, this proceeding will affect the price that CAUSE-PA members pay for natural gas service as well as the reliability and quality of that service.¹

¹ Ms. Linda Bergman and Ms. Dorothy Young are members of CAUSE-PA and customers of Columbia.

10. CAUSE-PA has standing to intervene because several of its members have or will suffer a direct, immediate, and substantial injury to an interest as a result of this proceeding. *See Energy Cons. Council of Pa.*, 995 A.2d at 476.

11. CAUSE-PA is represented in this proceeding by:

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Patrick M. Cicero, Esquire
Elizabeth R. Marx, Esquire
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12. Counsel for CAUSE-PA consents to the service of documents by electronic mail to pulp@palegalaid.net, as provided in 52 Pa. Code § 1.54(b)(3).

Answer

13. CAUSE-PA has preliminarily reviewed Columbia's rate filing, and objects to Columbia's request on the grounds that the proposed rate increase could result in unjust and unreasonable rates that would impose severe hardship on low and moderate income residential customers and consumers.

14. Continued delivery of safe, affordable natural gas service is of critical importance to the safety, welfare, and economic stability of all Pennsylvanians – particularly those with limited financial means. In recognition of this fact, the law requires that utility services – here natural gas service - be universally available at an affordable rate, and that universal service programs, including Columbia's hardship fund, be developed, maintained, and appropriately funded to ensure such affordability. *See* 66 Pa. C.S. § 2203(3), (8).

15. CAUSE-PA asserts that these matters, and any future modifications presented by intervening parties, must be thoroughly reviewed to ensure that all customers are able to access

safe, affordable natural gas service within the Columbia service territory.

WHEREFORE, CAUSE-PA respectfully requests that the Commission enter an order granting CAUSE-PA full status as an intervener in this proceeding with active party status.

Respectfully submitted,

PENNSYLVANIA UTILITY LAW PROJECT
Counsel for CAUSE-PA



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Date: April 12, 2016

Verification

I, **Linda J. Morris**, a member of the Executive Committee of the Coalition for Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency (“CAUSE-PA”), on behalf of CAUSE-PA, hereby state that the facts contained in the foregoing pleading are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, that I am duly authorized to make this Verification, and that I expect to be able to prove the same at a hearing held in this matter. I understand that the statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 10 Pa. C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn falsification to authorities).

Signature: 

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Coalition for
Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency in
Pennsylvania (CAUSE-PA)

Date: April 12, 2016

BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, et al., :
 :
 v. : Docket No. R-2016-2529660
 :
 Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. :

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that I have this day served copies of the **Petition to Intervene and Answer of the Coalition for Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania** upon the parties of record in the above captioned proceeding in accordance with the requirements of 52 Pa. Code § 1.54 in the manner and upon the persons listed below.

VIA Email and/or First Class Mail

The Honorable Charles E. Rainey, Jr.
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