

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-3265

Christine Castro
v.
Philadelphia Gas Works

Public Meeting held January 18, 2018
2606743-ALJ
F-2017-2606743

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER DAVID W. SWEET

Before the Commission is a complaint filed against Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) by a customer who alleged that there were incorrect charges on her bill and who seeks a payment arrangement for her arrearage. While I am sympathetic to this family whose limited income makes it quite difficult to manage their household bills, in this instance the fact that they made no payments at all on their gas bill for four years prior to the hearing in this case contributed to an arrearage exceeding \$30,000.

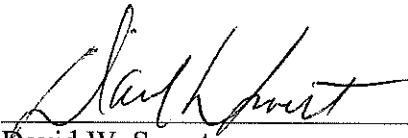
When a balance for a low-income family reaches this point, there are three points to be made: First, there are bigger issues here than utility bills and unfortunately, they are beyond our ability or capacity to resolve.

Second, a payment arrangement makes no sense because the monthly bills for the arrearage alone would be \$500 before adding the actual monthly usage or even budget billing to determine the monthly bill. If any of those payments is missed, the entire amount will be due.

Finally, this bill could not have reached this level unless the utility was asleep at the switch in allowing it to climb so high. Utilities have an affirmative duty to collect payment on an overdue account under Chapter 14 of the Public Utility Code. 66 Pa.C.S.A. §1410.1(2). The utility must report to this Commission annually those accounts that exceed \$10,000 and are required to demonstrate that they have taken steps to collect those arrearages.

Therefore, while I agree with the Initial Decision in denying a payment arrangement, I emphasize to PGW that this level of arrearage is simply not acceptable.

DATE: January 18, 2018



David W. Sweet
Commissioner