

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

Christine Castro
v.
Philadelphia Gas Works

Public Meeting held January 18, 2018
2606743-ALJ
Docket No. F-2017-2606743

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN GLADYS M. BROWN

Before the Commission today is the Complaint of Christine Castro filed on May 26, 2017, alleging that there were incorrect charges on her PGW bill, requesting a payment arrangement, and stating that she received a termination notice.

The Complainant testified that she received a lien notice in April 2017, for \$1,219.66 from the City of Philadelphia for her overdue PGW balance. The lien notice caused the Complainant to question the accuracy of PGW's May billing statement which showed that she owed \$30,515.81. The Complainant was unable to support her claim that she did not owe the amount reflected in the May billing statement.


PGW's records show that the Complainant last paid her gas bill on April 2, 2010, and that no payment was received again until January 2, 2014, when a LIHEAP payment was applied to the account. According to PGW, no payment was made after January 2014 through the date of the hearing on August 1, 2017.

Far too often, cases come before this Commission where the customer has accrued a large balance of over \$10,000, but the arrearage in this case out shadows most that I have seen. Once a balance gets this large, a customer has little to no chance of paying off the debt, especially a payment troubled customer such as Ms. Castro. The Commission continues to see the cyclical process of large arrearages that gets written off by the utilities, the utilities include the write offs in uncollectible expenses, and those uncollectible expenses ultimately factor into the rates paid by other customers.

I agree with the ALJ's denial of a payment arrangement in this case. I could glean no information from the record to support the almost non-existent payment history. Furthermore, I was unable to find any reason why PGW allowed the arrearage to grow to such an insurmountable amount.

I note that this Complainant was enrolled in LIHEAP. Still, I continue to encourage our utilities to step up their marketing efforts on universal service programs, budget billing, and energy efficiency to prevent any customer arrearage from becoming unmanageable. I also look forward to this Commission's continued dialogue on the issues of CAP affordability.

January 18, 2018
Date



Gladys M. Brown, Chairman