

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
HARRISBURG PENNSYLVANIA 17120**

**Duquesne Light Company  
Proposed 2020-2025 Universal Service & Energy  
Conservation Plan**

**Public Meeting held November 19, 2020  
3008227-BCS  
Docket No. M-2019-3008227**

**JOINT STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN GLADYS BROWN DUTRIEUILLE and  
VICE CHAIRMAN DAVID W. SWEET**

Before the Commission for consideration and disposition is the proposed 2020-2025 Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan of Duquesne Light Company.

The company's proposed plan adopts many of the customer assistance program (CAP) provisions defined in the Commission's amended CAP Policy Statement.<sup>1</sup> We applaud Duquesne for voluntarily proposing these policies, particularly the reduction in its energy burden levels. This will greatly assist existing and future CAP customers, specifically those with incomes that fall below 50% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG). In 2017, the Commission found that this subset of Duquesne's customer base – households with annual incomes of \$12,300 or less<sup>2</sup> – were paying up to 30% of their disposable income on their electric bills.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the Commission directed the company to initiate a collaborative stakeholder process with parties such as the Office of Consumer Advocate and the Coalition for Affordable Utility Service and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania, to develop an energy assistance model that would align with the Commission's then-effective CAP Policy Statement.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that low-income customers tended to pay more as a percentage of their total household income on utility bills is precisely what prompted this Commission to institute a two-year, statewide investigation on energy affordability. The Commission concluded that the then-applicable energy burden standards were unreasonable and proposed a series of policy changes to improve affordability, particularly for the poorest households in each utility's service territory. The Commission amended its Policy Statement by Order entered November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019.<sup>5</sup>

The November 2019 Order requested utilities to submit updated budget and enrollment projections should they pursue features under the new CAP Policy Statement. In Duquesne's 2020-2025 proposed plan, the company put forth an updated "Needs Assessment" – a five-year projection detailing this very information. Furthermore, on November 6, 2020 the company filed a Petition for Expedited Approval of its proposed CAP where additional cost impact data was provided.<sup>6</sup>

There are additional policy matters in the company's proposed plan that, in our opinion, require further clarification prior to approval. However, the adoption of the proposed energy burden standards is not one of

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<sup>1</sup> 52 Pa. Code § 69.261-267

<sup>2</sup> See <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

<sup>3</sup> See APPRISE Report from July 2015, *Duquesne Light Universal Service Programs Final Evaluation Report*, page 66. [https://www.puc.state.pa.us/general/pdf/USP\\_Evaluation-Duquesne/pdf](https://www.puc.state.pa.us/general/pdf/USP_Evaluation-Duquesne/pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The Commission approved Duquesne's revised 2017-2019 Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan. Docket No. M-2016-2534323 (Order entered April 19, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> 2019 Amendments to CAP Policy Statement, Final Policy Statement and Order. Docket No. M-2019-3012599 (order entered November 5, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Petition of Duquesne Light Company for Implementation of the Percentage of Income Payment Plan Customer Assistance Program as Proposed on January 6, 2020. Docket No. M-2019-3008227.

them as we have already deemed these standards to be reasonable, affordable, and necessary under our new Policy Statement. Now more than ever, there are households in need of greater assistance given the calamitous economic effects caused by the current health crisis. We believe Duquesne's proposed customer assistance program will provide the much-needed relief that so many are seeking. We urge the company to begin implementation as quickly as possible at the conclusion of this process.



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Gladys Brown Dutrieuille  
Chairman



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David W. Sweet  
Vice Chairman

November 19, 2020  
DATE