

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

**Public Meeting held February 9, 2023
3031727-BCS**

**PPL Electric Utilities Corporation
Universal Service and Energy
Conservation Plan for 2023-2027
Submitted in Compliance with 52 Pa. Code
§ 57.74**

Docket No. M-2022-3031727

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER KATHRYN L. ZERFUSS

Before us for consideration is the Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan for 2023-2027 (Plan) of PPL Electric Utilities Corporation (PPL). The Plan contains four major components designed to help low-income customers maintain utility service. These are: (1) OnTrack (*i.e.*, PPL's customer assistance program or CAP), which provides discounted bills and/or arrearage forgiveness for low-income residential customers; (2) Winter Relief Assistance Program (WRAP, *i.e.*, PPL's low income usage reduction program or LIURP), which provides weatherization and usage reduction services to help low-income customers reduce their energy usage and utility bills; (3) Customer Assistance and Referral Evaluation Services (CARES) program, which provides referral services and account credits for customers experiencing a temporary hardship; and (4) Operation Help (*i.e.*, PPL's Hardship Fund), which provides financial assistance to income-eligible customers who are unable to pay the full amount of their energy bills due to a temporary hardship.

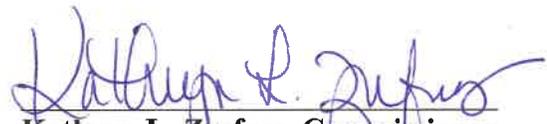
The OnTrack program as revised by this Opinion and Order contains significant enhancements such as the increase in the average monthly credit for nearly all OnTrack income tiers. For example, in the 0-50% FPIG (Federal Poverty Income Guidelines) tier the current 18-month credit for electric heat customers is \$223.72 and the proposed 12-month credit would increase to \$262.50. Also, the proposed increases in minimum OnTrack payments will likely be offset by the elimination of other related fees to participate.

However, I am concerned about the proposed revisions to the OnTrack recertification timeframes. The data provided by PPL shows that, in 2018 and 2019, less than half of OnTrack customers, removed for failure to recertify, returned to the program with six months. Due to its realignment of the program, the Company proposes more frequent recertification periods for the OnTrack customers. Recertification of regular OnTrack customers – those customers who do not receive LIHEAP or SSI – will change from every 18 months to every 12 months. Recertification for OnTrack customers receiving LIHEAP and SSI would change from every 36 months to every 24 months. And those reporting no income or less than their rent or mortgage would change from 9 months to 6 months.

In this area, I agree with the comments of the Office of Consumer Advocate regarding PPL's recertification rates and the recommendation that the Company develop strategies to address barriers to recertification. Moreover, I emphasize the directive in this Opinion and Order requiring PPL to work with its Universal Service Advisory Committee to evaluate the reasons customers fail to recertify for OnTrack and the resulting impact on customer payments, disconnections, and arrearages. I strongly encourage PPL to make this consultation and evaluation process a priority. Moreover, I would like to see this issue addressed by all stakeholders in the Commission's pending *Universal Service Rulemaking*.¹

Finally, I commend the Commission's Bureau of Consumer Services and the Law Bureau for their comprehensive work in evaluating the Plan and the input of the various stakeholders in this proceeding.

DATE: February 9, 2023



Kathryn L. Zerfuss, Commissioner

¹ See Docket No. L-2019-3012600.