



April 4, 2024

VIA E-File

Secretary Rosemary Chiavetta
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission v. Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.
Docket No. R-2024-3046519

Petition to Intervene and Answer of CAUSE-PA

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Please find the attached **Petition to Intervene and Answer of the Coalition for Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania (CAUSE-PA)** in the above noted proceeding.

As indicated on the attached Certificate of Service, service on the parties was accomplished by email only.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ria M. Pereira, Esq.
Counsel for CAUSE-PA

CC: Certificate of Service
Office of Administrative Law Judge (via email only: crainey@pa.gov)
Paul Diskin, TUS (via email only: pdiskin@pa.gov)
Office of Special Assistants (via email only: ra-OSA@pa.gov)

BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission :
 :
 v. : Docket No. R-2024-3046519
 :
 Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. :

**PETITION TO INTERVENE AND ANSWER
OF THE COALITION FOR AFFORDABLE UTILITY SERVICES
AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN PENNSYLVANIA**

PENNSYLVANIA UTILITY LAW PROJECT

Counsel for CAUSE-PA

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April 4, 2024

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 and files its Answer in the above-captioned proceeding. In support thereof, CAUSE-PA states as follows:

1. On March 15, 2024, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (“Columbia” or the “Company”) submitted a rate filing, Supplement No. 373 to Tariff Gas Pa. P.U.C. No. 9 (“Supplement No. 337”) which proposes to increase overall rates by approximately \$124.1 million per year. According to the Company, the total bill for a residential customer who purchases 70 therms of gas from Columbia per month, would increase from \$118.16 to \$136.92 per month, or by 15.88 percent. (Filing Cover Ltr. at 1-2).

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. PUC, 995 A.2d 465, 476 (Pa. Commw. 2010) (alteration in original) (citing Trippls Park v. Pa. PUC, 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 and moderate 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. 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 gas service as well as the reliability and quality of that service.

10. In addition, CAUSE-PA was an active party to Columbia's last rate proceeding, Docket No. R-2022-3031211, as well as other related proceedings. The outcome of this proceeding may impact settlements and orders from these prior proceedings, and CAUSE-PA therefore has a significant interest in the impact of Columbia's proposals set forth in this proceeding.

11. CAUSE-PA has standing to intervene because 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.

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

Ria M. Pereira, Esq., PA ID: 316771
Elizabeth R. Marx, Esq., PA ID: 309014
John W. Sweet, Esq., PA ID: 320182
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13. Counsel for CAUSE-PA consents to the service of documents by electronic mail to pulp@pautilitylawproject.org, as provided in 52 Pa. Code § 1.54(b)(3).

Answer

14. 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 economic hardship on low and moderate income residential customers.

15. Continued delivery of safe, affordable 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, including natural gas services, will be universally available at an affordable rate, and that all universal service programs be developed, maintained, and appropriately funded to ensure such affordability. See 66 Pa. C.S. § 2203(3), (8). Columbia's general rate increase, which would pose a significant increase in the costs of basic gas service for its customers, could have a disparate impact on households with limited economic means, and will undermine bill savings achieved through adoption of energy efficiency and conservation measures.

16. CAUSE-PA asserts that these matters, and any future modifications presented by intervening parties, must be thoroughly reviewed and investigated 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 4, 2024

Verification

I, **Elizabeth R. Marx**, legal counsel for CAUSE-PA, on behalf of CAUSE-PA, hereby states that the facts contained in the foregoing pleadings 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 18 Pa. C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn falsification to authorities).



Elizabeth R. Marx, Esq.

*On behalf of the Coalition for Affordable Utility
Services and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania*

Dated: April 4, 2024

<p>Harrisburg, PA 17105-1778 tsstewart@hmslegal.com</p>	<p>P.O. Box 1166 Harrisburg, PA 17108-1166 cmincavage@mcneeslaw.com kstark@mcneeslaw.com</p>
<p>Thomas J. Sniscak, Esq. Whitney E. Snyder, Esq. Phillip D. Demanchick, Esq. Hawke McKeon & Sniscak, LLP 100 N. 10th Street Harrisburg, PA 17101 tjsniscak@hmslegal.com wesnyder@hmslegal.com pddemanchick@hmslegal.com</p>	

Respectfully Submitted,
PENNSYLVANIA UTILITY LAW PROJECT
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