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April 19, 2024

**VIA ELECTRONIC FILING**

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary  
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission  
Commonwealth Keystone Building  
400 North Street, 2nd Floor North  
P.O. Box 3265  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

**Re: Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.  
to Proposed 2024-2028 Universal Service and Energy  
Conservation Plan  
Docket No. M-2023-3039487**

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Enclosed for filing please find Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.'s Petition for Reconsideration in the above referenced docket.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at (223) 488-0794.

Very truly yours,

Candis A. Tunilo

/kak

Enclosures

cc: Parties of Record (w/enc.)  
Joseph Magee - Bureau of Consumer Services [jmagee@pa.gov](mailto:jmagee@pa.gov)  
Norma Bowman – Bureau of Consumer Services [nobowman@pa.gov](mailto:nobowman@pa.gov)  
Christina Chase-Pettis - Office of Communications [cchasepett@pa.gov](mailto:cchasepett@pa.gov)  
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**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. :  
Universal Service and Energy : Docket No. M-2023-3039487  
Conservation Plan for 2024-2028 :

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**COLUMBIA GAS OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.’S  
PETITION FOR RECONSIDERATION**

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AND NOW, comes Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (“Columbia” or the “Company”), by and through its undersigned counsel, and pursuant to 66 Pa. C.S. § 703(g) and 52 Pa. Code § 5.572(a), submits this Petition for Reconsideration of certain portions of the Public Utility Commission’s (“Commission”) Order of April 4, 2024, at the above docket, and in support thereof, avers as follows:

**I. INTRODUCTION**

On or about March 31, 2023,<sup>1</sup> Columbia filed its proposed Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan for 2024-2028 (“Proposed 2024-2028 Plan” or “USECP”). On May 10, 2023, the Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Services (“BCS”) convened a telephonic meeting to allow stakeholders to provide informal comments and pose questions to Columbia about the USECP. On June 15, 2023, the Commission entered an Order Directing Supplemental Information and Establishing a Comment Period (“June 15<sup>th</sup> Order”). On July 17, 2023, Columbia submitted supplemental information pursuant to the June 15<sup>th</sup> Order. Thereafter, various stakeholders submitted comments and reply comments to the USECP and Columbia’s supplemental information. Columbia submitted reply comments.

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<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, on or about April 4, 2023, Columbia filed an updated USECP that included page numbers.

On April 4, 2024, the Commission issued an Order approving Columbia’s Proposed 2024-2028 Plan with revisions (“April 4<sup>th</sup> Order”). Although not the subject of this Petition, but to put the matter into perspective, among the revisions to Columbia’s Proposed 2024-2028 Plan directed by the Commission were the elimination of the CAP Plus and pre-program arrearage copay, which were well established CAP cost-control measures,<sup>2</sup> and changes to the way Columbia calculates “household income” to determine CAP eligibility and payment amount. *See* April 4<sup>th</sup> Order at 114, Ordering Paragraphs 5(a), (c).

As Columbia has already explained, removal of CAP Plus and copays from CAP asked-to-pay amounts will increase the CAP shortfall, which is paid by non-CAP residential customers, by more than \$3.3 million annually. *See* Columbia Reply Comments at 5. It is expected that implementing the change to the calculation of “household income” will increase the shortfall by another \$150,000. These changes will also require approximately \$300,000 in IT costs. And these are only some of the costs to implement the revisions in the April 4<sup>th</sup> Order.

With the implementation of just the revisions identified above, Columbia’s non-CAP residential customers will each pay approximately \$113 per year toward the Company’s low-income programs, when in 2022 customers contributed approximately \$107 per year. Columbia notes its concern for how much it costs ratepayers to support these robust programs and the need for balance to keep bills affordable for all customers. The Company makes every attempt to balance how to keep those in need with natural gas service and the costs that other residential ratepayers must incur to do so, while complying with the law. Further, Columbia constantly seeks opportunities to create efficiencies for customers and streamline administration of the

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<sup>2</sup> In July 2023, Columbia was required to refund \$542,000 to the Department of Human Services. These funds represented unused LIHEAP grants that were provided to Columbia’s CAP customers. These funds also represented funds that could have been used to decrease the CAP shortfall and indicate that Columbia’s CAP asked-to-pay amounts, which included CAP Plus and possibly, a PPA copay, are at an affordable level. *See* Columbia Reply Comments at 5-6.

USECP and is willing to continue working with stakeholders, the Commission and other utilities to find and implement such opportunities.

## **II. LEGAL STANDARD**

Columbia submits this Petition pursuant to Section 5.572(a) of the Commission's regulations, which requires the party seeking reconsideration specify the findings and orders involved and the points relied upon by the petitioner, with appropriate record references and specific requests for the findings or orders desired. *See* 52 Pa. Code § 5.572(a). The Commission may, after notice and opportunity to be heard, rescind or amend any order made by it. *See* 66 Pa. C.S. § 703(g).

It is well established that in seeking reconsideration from this Commission, it is proper to raise new and novel arguments not previously heard or considerations which appear to have been overlooked by the Commission. *See Duick v. PGW*, 56 Pa. P.U.C. 553, 558 (1982).

## **III. REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION**

### **A. Security deposits.**

1. Chapter 14 provides that the Commission shall not prohibit public utilities from requiring a cash deposit from applicants or customers in specific instances. *See* 66 Pa. C.S. § 1404(a).

2. Public utilities may not, however, require a customer or applicant that is confirmed to be eligible for a customer assistance program to provide a cash deposit. *See* 66 Pa. C.S. § 1404(a.1). *See also* 52 Pa. Code § 56.32(e).

3. Columbia complies with the Public Utility Code and Commission regulations with regard to security deposits. *See* Columbia Suppl. Info. at 6. Columbia does not require

security deposits from any applicants confirmed to be eligible for CAP, as required by 52 Pa. Code § 56.32(e). *Id.*

4. At issue in Columbia's USECP and in this Petition is the disposition of *properly* collected security deposits when a customer later becomes eligible for a customer assistance program. Section 56.53(f) requires a utility to refund a deposit, along with any applicable interest, within 60 days of determining that the customer or applicant from whom a deposit was collected is eligible for the utility's CAP. 52 Pa. Code § 56.53(f).

5. In the April 4<sup>th</sup> Order, the Commission directs Columbia to:

refund security deposits, with applicable interest, collected from customers who are income-eligible for CAP. Columbia may apply the security deposit to the account balance only with the customer's informed consent. As part of obtaining this informed consent, Columbia must explain to the customer how applying the security deposit to the account balance would impact the customer's monthly bill.

*See* April 4<sup>th</sup> Order at 31. *See also* April 4<sup>th</sup> Order at 114.

6. Columbia notes that it is unlikely that customers with balances would choose to apply their security deposit to those balances if their other choice is a refund. As such, it is believed that most, if not all, of these customers would request a refund of their security deposit.

7. Issuing refunds by check to customers with balances on their accounts is time-consuming and expensive.<sup>3</sup> It requires coordination with Columbia's Accounts Payable and Vendor teams and requires the creation of a separate and distinct vendor for each customer to which a refund will be issued. This is a manual, multi-step process that can take up to three weeks.

8. Since it is usually determined that a properly collected security deposit is no longer appropriate to hold when a customer seeks to enter CAP, the check request process would

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<sup>3</sup> To be clear, Columbia will continue to offer customers without arrears a refund of their security deposit by check, which is the Company's current practice.

also delay a customer's entry into Columbia's CAP until the refund check was issued and cashed by the customer.

9. Columbia, however, can post the amounts slated for refund as a credit to a customer's account relatively easily and quickly. This can be done without having to first apply the refund amounts to a past due balance and does not involve any other Columbia teams in the process.

10. For these reasons, the Company seeks Commission reconsideration of the requirement to issue a refund, via check, of a properly collected security deposit to a customer that is later determined eligible for CAP, if the customer requests a refund.

11. Specifically, Columbia respectfully requests that the Commission amend its April 4<sup>th</sup> Order to permit Columbia to post these refunds as credits to customers' accounts rather than requiring the issuance of a check. Columbia submits this would not be posted to reduce the account arrears and that customers would still have the benefit of the funds and could use them toward payment of future Columbia bills.

B. Reporting requirements.

12. In its April 4<sup>th</sup> Order, the Commission included several reporting requirements for Columbia, including, but not limited to:

- That Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc., shall file and serve a report on the Health and Safety Pilot Program data each calendar year, including the number of 118 Health and Safety Pilot Program jobs completed, actual weather normalized savings, and the total dollars spent during the previous calendar year. This report must be filed on April 1 each year at Docket No. M-2023-3039487, beginning in 2025, for the duration of its 2024-2028 Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan.
- That Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. shall file and serve at Docket No. M-2023-3039487, a report on its Emergency Repair Program data each calendar year on April 1 at Docket No. M-2023-3039487, beginning in 2025,

for the duration of its 2024– 2028 Universal Service and Energy Conservation plan.

See April 4<sup>th</sup> Order at 117-118, at Ordering Paragraphs 11 and 13.

13. The Commission views the programs as extensions of the Company’s LIURP, and the Company’s annual LIURP Report is due by April 30<sup>th</sup>.


14. As such, notions of efficiency for the Company, Commission and stakeholders would be better served having the Health and Safety Pilot Program and Emergency Repair Program reports due on April 30<sup>th</sup>, when the annual LIURP report is filed, rather than on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

15. Therefore, Columbia respectfully requests that the Commission reconsider and amend this portion of its April 4<sup>th</sup> Order to direct the filing of the Health and Safety Pilot Program and Emergency Repair Program reports by April 30<sup>th</sup> of each year in order to coincide with the Company’s annual LIURP report filing.

### III. CONCLUSION

Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. respectfully requests that the Commission grant this Petition for Reconsideration and amend its Order of April 4, 2024, as set forth herein.

Respectfully submitted,  
Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.



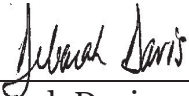
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Date: April 19, 2024

## VERIFICATION

I, Deborah Davis being the Manager of Universal Services for Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc., hereby state that the facts above set forth are true and correct (or are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief) and that I expect to be able to prove the same at a hearing held in this matter. I understand that the statements made herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa. C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn falsification to authorities).

Date: 4/19/2024

  
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Deborah Davis  
Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that true and correct copies of the foregoing have been served upon the following persons, in the manner indicated, in accordance with the requirements of § 1.54 (relating to service by a participant).

### VIA E-MAIL ONLY


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Dated: April 19, 2023

  
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