

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

**Paulos Ibrahim**  
vs.  
**PPL Electric Utilities Corporation**

**Public Meeting of May 9, 2024**  
**3042066-ALJ**  
**Docket No. C-2023-3042066**

**MOTION OF VICE CHAIR KIMBERLY BARROW**

The matter before us for disposition is a Formal Complaint (Complaint) filed by Mr. Paulos Ibrahim (Complainant or Mr. Ibrahim) against PPL Electric Utilities Corporation (PPL) alleging that PPL is threatening to shut off his electric service due to his failure to pay bills he believes contain incorrect or higher-than-normal usage and charges. As relief, the Complainant requested the amount billed to be corrected, and for PPL to test his meter.

On August 28, 2023, PPL filed a response to the Complaint denying incorrect charges on the Complainant's bills and admitting that it indeed issued a termination notice due to unpaid bills that totaled \$2,903.79, with \$2,839.94 of that total being in arrears.

Following an evidentiary hearing, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Chad L. Allensworth issued an Initial Decision on March 7, 2024, dismissing the Complaint for failure of the Complainant to meet his burden of proof.

Here, Mr. Ibrahim is disputing electric bills from December 2022 to March 2023. The Complainant testified that he lives with his father in a three-bedroom, two-bathroom townhouse with a living room and a kitchen.<sup>1</sup> The property has a washer and hot water that runs on electricity.<sup>2</sup> Although the property uses electric baseboard heat as its sole source of heat, the Complainant stated that he keeps the thermostat at the property between 65° F and 68° F regardless of how cold the weather gets.<sup>3</sup>

On December 28, 2022, PPL issued Mr. Ibrahim an estimated bill of 2699 kWh based upon an average daily usage of 74.97 kWh over a 36-day period from November 2022 to December 2022. At the time, the Complainant had been living at the property for only a few months.<sup>4</sup> PPL indicated that it issued an estimated bill for November 2022 usage due to meter data transfer system errors in December of 2022.<sup>5</sup>

However, in the January 24, 2023 bill, PPL indicated the Complainant's actual usage for the November-December 2022 billing period was 6134 kWh and charged him approximately \$1,500

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<sup>1</sup> Hearing Transcript, pg. 14 (January 4, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Hearing Transcript, pgs. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Hearing Transcript, pgs. 10-11, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Complainant moved to the property in October 2022. He previously lived in a different townhouse across the street from the property, which was also supplied electricity by PPL, but he did not have bills as high as the current property. Hearing Transcript, pgs. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Hearing Transcript, pgs. 25-26.

for a total usage of 7725 kWh.<sup>6</sup> PPL claims it underbilled Mr. Ibrahim in its estimated billing and argues that the Complainant's usage is similar to prior years' usage (albeit, not the Complainant's) at the property. PPL further compared the Complainant's usage with prior years' usage for the following months: Dec.-Jan. – 4290 kWh (prior – 6179 kWh); Jan. -Feb. – 4303 kWh (prior - 6111 kWh); Feb.-Mar. – 4039 kWh (prior – 4159 kWh); Mar.-Apr. – 2510 kWh (prior – 4157).<sup>7</sup> As mentioned above, the ALJ dismissed the Complaint after finding the Complainant had not presented a prima facie case for overbilling and failed to establish a customer service violation after PPL failed to perform a meter test.<sup>8</sup>

First and foremost, while I agree with the ALJ that the Complainant presented no evidence to demonstrate that the previous townhouse he resided was comparable to the current property in terms of size, insulation, energy efficiency, heat source, etc., I disagree with the ALJ's overall conclusion in this matter.<sup>9</sup> There is enough evidence to demonstrate that the usage billed by PPL is relatively high for a property with a household of two and the usage pattern described by the Complainant. The Complainant presented uncontroverted testimony that he and his father use minimum electricity as they are infrequently home because his father works full-time and the Complainant is a student who also works part-time.<sup>10</sup> While there is nothing in the record about size, insulation or energy efficiency at the property, the property is a three-bedroom townhouse. The fact that the Complainant keeps the thermostat at the property between 65° F and 68° F makes me question the 4000 to 6000 kWh average usage meter readings for the period in question.<sup>11</sup>

Further, PPL issued the Complainant an estimated bill based on 2699 kWh usage from November 2022 to December 2022. However, according to PPL, the Complainant's actual usage for the November-December 2022 billing period was 6134 kWh.<sup>12</sup> This means PPL underbilled the Complainant by approximately 127.3%, which is a significant variation from the Complainant's actual usage. This significant variation between estimated and actual usage by PPL may be an issue.

Also, I believe adequate meter reading data is now available to make a more informed comparison of the Complainant's usage history. Therefore, I believe PPL should provide any updated comparative meter readings for the Complainant subsequent to the December 2002 to March 2023 billing period or any other relevant information, for further review by the ALJ. As such, the ALJ's Initial Decision should be vacated, and this matter should be remanded to the Office of Administrative Law Judge for further action as necessary and the issuance of an Initial Decision on Remand.

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<sup>6</sup> This charge also includes Complainant's usage from December 2022 to January 2023. Hearing Transcript, pgs. 26-28.

<sup>7</sup> Hearing Transcript, pgs. 26-29, 33-36; PPL Exhibits 8, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Initial Decision, pgs. 14, 16 (entered March 7, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Initial Decision, pg. 13 (entered March 7, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> Hearing Transcript, pgs. 10-11.


<sup>11</sup> According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), the average residential customer uses 887-1000 kWh of electricity per month. [Average monthly electricity bill for U.S. residential customers declined in 2019 - U.S. Energy Information Administration \(EIA\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Hearing Transcript, pg. 26.

**THEREFORE, I MOVE THAT:**

1. The Initial Decision of Administrative Law Judge Chad L. Allensworth, issued on March 7, 2024, is vacated, consistent with this Motion.
2. This matter be remanded to the Office of Administrative Law Judge for such further action as necessary and the issuance of an Initial Decision on Remand.
3. That PPL Electric Utilities Corporation is directed to provide to the Office of Administrative Law Judge for review, updated comparative meter readings for Paulos Ibrahim subsequent to the December 2022 to March 2023 billing period along with any other relevant information.
4. The Office of Special Assistants prepare an Opinion and Order, consistent with this Motion.

May 23, 2024

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**Kimberly Barrow, Vice Chair**