

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120**

**2023 REVIEW OF ALL
JURISDICTIONAL FIXED
UTILITIES' UNIVERSAL
SERVICE PROGRAMS**

**PUBLIC MEETING OF AUGUST 22, 2024
3038944-BCS
DOCKET NO. M-2023-3038944**

**JOINT STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STEPHEN M. DeFRANK and
COMMISSIONER KATHRYN L. ZERFUSS**

Today the Commission issues an Order that encourages all energy and water/wastewater public utilities with universal service or assistance programs to take steps to begin using a common application form (CAF) in place of their existing universal service or assistance application. The CAF stems from a consensus model CAF that participants in the Commission's Universal Service Working Group¹ designed so that all public utilities could use an application form that requested the same information from customers.

The use of a CAF will help income eligible customers apply and recertify for multiple public utility programs (electric, natural gas, and water/wastewater) at the same time without duplication of efforts. We also envision that the CAF will be available in many languages, providing greater access for customers who wish to apply for universal service or assistance programs. The CAF will increase universal service program coordination among all public utilities and streamline the eligibility and enrollment process for programs that help eligible Pennsylvania families pay for their gas, electric, and water service. While the Commonwealth's local telephone companies operate under different rules, we encourage energy and water utilities to also advise their customers of the Lifeline program for telephone assistance and for the local telephone companies to advise their customers of assistance available for their energy and water service.

We strongly urge the public utilities to incorporate the information identified for a statewide CAF, for both their paper and their online universal service and assistance application processes, as efficiently as possible to ensure that the utilities will be able to provide meaningful input on a statewide CAF in a potential future universal service rulemaking.

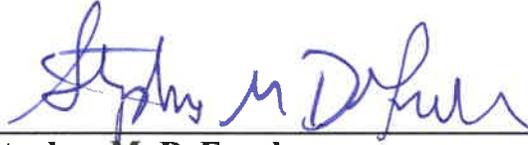
Thank you to our Commission staff, the utilities, the advocates, and other vested partners who have worked diligently to reach a consensus on the contents of a CAF. In addition to working to design a CAF, the working group productively collaborated on other topics to address

¹ The Commission's Universal Service Working Group was formed in September of 2023.

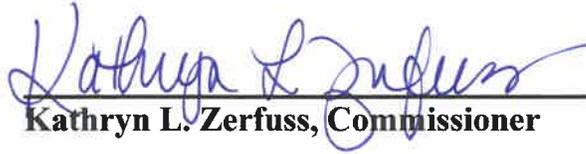
ways to increase coordination of customer assistance programs among utilities, streamline the eligibility and enrollment process, and reduce the number of eligible customers who may be losing benefits. The efforts of this working group will help the Commission achieve its statutory obligations to continue the protections, policies and services that assist customers in affording electric and natural gas service.² We look forward to more good things coming out of the Universal Service Working Group.

August 22, 2024

Date



Stephen M. DeFrank
Chairman



Kathryn L. Zarfuss, Commissioner

² 66 Pa.C.S. § 2802(10); 66 Pa.C.S. § 2203(7).