

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Raymond G. Gehring	:	
	:	
v.	:	F-2024-3048169
	:	
Verizon Pennsylvania LLC	:	

**INTERIM ORDER
GRANTING COMPLAINANT’S MOTION FOR CONTINUANCE**

On or about March 12, 2024, Raymond G. Gehring (Complainant) filed a Formal Complaint (Complaint) with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) against Verizon Pennsylvania LLC (Verizon or Company).¹ Mr. Gehring’s Complaint was served on Verizon on April 5, 2024. Mr. Gehring alleges that Verizon disconnected his telephone service and applied fraudulent charges to his December 2023 and January 2024 bills. He also claims that Verizon should have applied the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) discount to his bills beginning with his October 2023 bill and, had that discount been applied, his service would not have been disconnected.

On April 25, 2024, Verizon filed an answer to the Complaint. The answer was served to Mr. Gehring by First-Class Mail. Verizon denied that the ACP discount could have been applied to the Complainant’s account because the Complainant subscribed to basic local telephone service. Verizon states that the ACP provides a discount for internet service (only), and Mr. Gehring did not subscribe to Verizon internet service. The Company admits that Mr. Gehring’s service was disconnected for nonpayment. Verizon asked the Commission to refer the matter to mediation to allow Verizon an opportunity to attempt to contact Mr. Gehring to address his billing questions.

¹ The Complaint is a timely appeal from the determination of the Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Services (BCS), at BCS No. 3957029, which dismissed Complainant’s informal billing complaint but provided him a payment arrangement. A timely BCS appeal is subject to *de novo* review. 52 Pa. Code § 56.173(a).

On April 29, 2024, Chief Administrative Law Judge Charles E. Rainey, Jr. issued an Interim Order Setting Resolution Conference (Interim Order) referring this matter to mediation. The Interim Order was served to Mr. Gehring by First-Class Mail.

On May 23, 2024, the Complainant filed a reply to Verizon's answer. The reply is dated May 22, 2024 and was served to Verizon by First-Class Mail.

Mediation was not successful.

On October 2, 2024, the Commission issued an initial hearing notice setting a formal call-in telephonic hearing for this matter for November 6, 2024 and assigned Dennis J. Buckley as the presiding officer. On November 1, 2024, the Commission issued a notice rescheduling the hearing to be held in-person on November 20, 2024. On November 13, 2024, the Commission issued a notice rescheduling the in-person hearing for December 20, 2024. Most recently, on December 13, 2024, the Commission canceled the December 20, 2024 hearing.

This matter was reassigned to me as the presiding officer on April 3, 2025.²

Given the passage of time, I issued an Interim Order on April 14, 2025, in which I directed the parties to confer about possible settlement and provide a joint update to me by May 28, 2025. This was a roughly 45-day period, which recognized that mail or the equivalent may be the only available means of communication between the parties. I indicated that, if the parties were not able to resolve the matter, I would schedule a hearing.

On May 28, 2025, Verizon filed a Certificate of Satisfaction (Certificate), pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 5.24(b).³ The Certificate provided notice that the Complaint would be withdrawn and the Commission's file closed, unless the Complainant filed an objection within 10 days of its filing.

² A judge change notice was formally issued dated April 23, 2025. The record does not reflect any other activity between the December 2024 hearing cancellation and the April 2025 reassignment notice.

³ On the same date, Verizon filed a Corrected Certificate of Satisfaction. The only change was to correct the spelling of the Complainant's name.

On May 30, 2025, I received a status report from the Complainant, which was timely deposited in First-Class Mail on May 28, 2025. In the status report, the Complainant indicated that his Complaint had not been resolved, contrary to Verizon's understanding per the company's correspondence to Mr. Gehring dated April 22, 2025. The attached proof of service stated that the status report was also mailed to Verizon on May 28, 2025.

On June 16, 2025, the Complainant's Objection to Certificate of Satisfaction (Objection) was filed with the Commission. The stamped date of deposit in First-Class Mail was June 12, 2025.

As a technical matter, the Objection was not filed within 10 days of the Certificate of Satisfaction. Given the additional three days afforded by 52 Pa. Code § 1.56(b), which applies whenever a party is required to do an act within a prescribed period after service of a document upon the party and the document is served by First-Class Mail, the deadline for Complainant to file an Objection was June 9, 2025 (the first business day following the deadline of June 7, 2025). As noted, the date of deposit was June 12, 2025.

On July 15, 2025, I issued an interim order stating that I would disregard this procedural defect, pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 1.2 (providing for the liberal construction of the rules, particularly where the litigant is self-represented), and deem the Objection as being timely-filed. The delay was minimal and, further, the Complainant had provided notice to Verizon in his status report that, as of May 28, 2025, he did not consider there to be a settlement. Thus, I did not find that mailing the Objection three days late adversely affected a substantive right of Verizon.

Accordingly, there being no resolution of this matter, I directed that an evidentiary hearing would be scheduled. By interim order issued on July 15, 2025, I specified that the location for the hearing would be an available hearing room in the Commonwealth Keystone Building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in September 2025 and that the parties and any witnesses could participate in-person or by telephone. As stated in the interim order, the hybrid-format was intended to provide the greatest flexibility for participation by the parties and potential witnesses.

To assist me in conducting the hearing most efficiently, I also directed the parties to notify me in writing at least 10 days prior to the scheduled hearing if they would participate by telephone.

Allowing time for that deadline, I issued a prehearing order on September 2, 2025, identifying that counsel for Verizon Pennsylvania LLC had notified me that their attorney and witnesses will participate in the evidentiary hearing by telephone. I also reiterated the information provided in the hearing notices regarding the various rules and procedures governing the evidentiary hearing. The prehearing order was served on Mr. Gehring by overnight mail and delivered on September 3, 2025.

Also on September 3, 2025, I received the Complainant's Motion for Continuance (Motion). Mr. Gehring requested a continuance of the September 9, 2025 hearing for 15 to 30 days. The Motion was dated September 2, 2025 and included a Proof of Service, stating that it was filed with the Commission and served to Verizon. In his Motion, the Complainant stated that he has not been able to reach and/or communicate with his potential witness. Mr. Gehring stated that, as of August 27, 2025, he was being assisted by an office aide/staff worker for a Pennsylvania state official to locate a caseworker with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services in its Reading, Pennsylvania call center – either a specific caseworker he last spoke to in November 2023 or, if unable to find that person, an alternate caseworker.

The Complainant's Motion did not indicate Verizon's position on the requested continuance. Given the limited time before the hearing, I contacted counsel for Verizon, who responded that Verizon does not oppose the hearing being continued.

Except as otherwise provided by statute, requests for continuance of hearings or for extension of time in which to perform an act required or allowed to be done at or within a specified time by this title or by order of the Commission or presiding officer, shall be by motion in writing, timely filed with the Commission, stating the facts on which the application rests. 52 Pa. Code § 1.15(b). Only for good cause shown will requests for continuance be considered. *Id.*

Here, the Complainant's motion is the first continuance request, was made in writing, and timely filed.

Based on the Respondent's stated reason in the unopposed Motion, I find that the Complainant has established good cause to postpone the September 9, 2025 hearing. A notice(s) canceling the current hearing date and rescheduling it to a future date will be issued.

Next, in his Motion, the Complainant repeats the request he made in his May 28, 2025 status report for the hearing to be held in-person and at a state office building located at 625 Cherry Street in Reading, Pennsylvania, within one mile of the Complainant's home. The Complainant states that it would be an extreme hardship for him and his potential witness to travel to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for the hearing. Mr. Gehring suggests that this request was overlooked or unfairly ignored since it was not addressed in the scheduling of the September 9, 2025 hearing. Mr. Gehring's request was not overlooked or ignored.

As discussed above, the September 9, 2025 hearing was scheduled as a hybrid hearing for the convenience of both parties, providing the option for in-person or telephonic participation. This was an intentional response to the Complainant's request, which considered, among other things: 1) the location of the Complainant and potential witness; 2) the Complainant's statements about his physical limitations and hardship for him and his potential witness to travel; (3) the Complainant's lack of landline phone service; 3) the location of Commission hearing rooms in Harrisburg and Philadelphia and none in Reading; and 4) the communications technology available in the Commission hearing rooms, which enables participants to appear in-person or connect by phone. Based on these considerations, Mr. Gehring's request will be denied in part – the rescheduled hearing will be held in Harrisburg. However, for the convenience of the parties, including the Complainant and his potential witness, all participants will have the option to appear by telephone.

ORDER

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the Complainant's Motion for Continuance is granted.
2. That the hearing scheduled for September 9, 2025, is cancelled and will be rescheduled.
3. That the scheduling staff of the Office of Administrative Law Judge shall reschedule this matter for hearing in an available hearing room in the Commonwealth Keystone Building in October 2025, with the option for participation by telephone, and notify the parties in writing.
4. That the parties are directed to notify me in writing, no later than 10 days prior to the scheduled hearing, if any participant(s) will join the hearing by telephone.

Date: September 4, 2025

/s/
Erin L. Gannon
Administrative Law Judge

F-2024-3048169 - RAYMOND G GEHRING v. VERIZON PENNSYLVANIA LLC

RAYMOND G GEHRING

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Served via first-class mail September 4, 2025

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