

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

**Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC
Universal Service and Energy
Conservation Plan for 2019-2024**

**Public Meeting held October 9, 2025
3052324-BCS
Docket Nos. M-2018-3003177, M-2020-
3021343, P-2024-3052324**

**Peoples Gas Company LLC Universal
Service and Energy Conservation Plan for
2019-2024**

**Petition of Peoples Natural Gas Company
LLC – to Amend 2019-2023 Universal
Service and Energy Conservation Plan**

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STEPHEN M. DeFRANK

Before the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) is a Petition for Reconsideration filed by the Coalition for Affordable Utility Service and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania (CAUSE-PA) to the Commission’s April 24, 2025 Order, which denied the Petition of Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC (Peoples or Company) to amend its Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan (USECP) for 2019-2024.

Peoples agreed to seek approval to amend its USECP in a Low-Income Stipulation that was filed as part of a settlement of its 2024 base rate case.¹ The Low-Income Stipulation provided, in part, that Peoples will seek authorization to amend its USECP to allow the Company to initiate auto-enrollment of Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) recipients with significant balances into its Customer Assistance Program (CAP). The Low-Income Stipulation also sought authorization to amend the language in Peoples’ tariff to permit auto-enrollment in CAP if the customer has a significant account balance and received a LIHEAP payment within the past two years. The settlement and accompanying Low-Income Stipulation were unanimously approved by the Commission on September 12, 2024.

Peoples complied with its commitment by filing a Petition on December 11, 2024, seeking approval to automatically enroll customers into CAP if they have an account balance exceeding \$300 and received a LIHEAP grant within the past two years. As previously mentioned, the Commission denied the Petition on April 24, 2025.

¹ *Pa. PUC, et al. v. Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC*, Docket Nos. R-2023-3044549, *et al.*

One of the grounds under which CAUSE-PA seeks reconsideration of the April 24, 2025 Order pertains to Peoples’ tariff, which contains language referencing automatic CAP enrollment for LIHEAP recipients. CAUSE-PA suggests that Peoples be directed to consult with stakeholders to file an amended Petition within 90-days to align its tariff with the concerns raised by the Commission in the April 24, 2025 Order.

Convening a stakeholder collaborative to discuss how Peoples could or should implement auto-enrollment of LIHEAP recipients into CAP is appropriate to address the wide range of issues the Commission raised in the April 24, 2025 Order. Stakeholder collaboratives on this topic have been convened before.² Furthermore, implementation of Peoples’ tariff provision is contingent on an approved auto-enrollment provision in an amended USECP.

With respect to automatic enrollment in CAP, I have previously highlighted that participation in a CAP comes with benefits as well as certain forfeitures.³ For example, customers lose the ability to be awarded a Commission-approved payment arrangement on CAP arrearages.⁴ Also, there could be other universal service programs available to effectively address a balance that slightly exceeds \$300, such as a Hardship Fund grant, which would not implicate the forfeitures associated with CAP.

As I have stated before, consumers should be provided with relevant and complete information about participating in a CAP before any transfer occurs. When discussing auto enrollment, I encourage the stakeholders to consider all aspects of CAP participation, including those with potentially adverse impacts to the customer.

Date: October 9, 2025



Stephen M. DeFrank
Chairman

² See *Pa. PUC et al. v. PECO Energy Company – Electric Division*, Docket Nos. R-2024-3046931 *et al.*; *Pa. PUC, et al. v. PECO Energy Company – Gas Division*, Docket Nos. R-2024-3046932 *et al.*

³ *Id.* See Statement of Chairman Stephen M. DeFrank.

⁴ See 66 Pa.C.S § 1405(c), as clarified in *Sunset of Chapter 14, Title 66 of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Code*, Docket No. M-2024-3052328 (Statement of Policy entered December 24, 2024).