

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

**Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC
Universal Service and Energy
Conservation Plan for 2019-2024
Public Meeting of March 26, 2026**

**Public Meeting of March 26, 2026
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) today is the Amended Petition of Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC (Peoples or Company) to Amend its Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan (USECP) for 2019-2024 (Amended Petition). In the Amended Petition, Peoples seeks approval to (1) 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), and (2) permit auto-recertification using shared income information.

Today, I am voting to defer approval of Peoples' Amended Petition pending the filing of additional information by the Company and responsive stakeholder comments. I strongly urge Peoples to use this additional opportunity to address the auto-enrollment concerns I raised at the Commission's Public Meeting on October 9, 2025 when the Commission initially considered the Company's proposal to amend its USECP.¹ At that time, I explained that participation in a CAP comes not only with benefits, but also with certain forfeitures, such as the loss of the ability to be awarded a Commission-approved payment arrangement on CAP arrearages.² To ensure that customers are fully informed about CAP participation, including the potentially adverse impacts, I urged Peoples to provide customers with relevant and complete information about participation in CAP *before* any transfers would occur.

¹ See Statement of Chairman Stephen M. DeFrank, entered in the instant dockets on October 9, 2025.

² See former Section 1405 of the Public Utility Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S § 1405(c); see also *Sunset of Chapter 14, Title 66 of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Code*, Docket No. M-2024-3052328 (Statement of Policy entered December 24, 2024).

I am disappointed to now see that Peoples would continue to require impacted customers to opt-out of CAP auto-enrollment after the fact, and without a full explanation of enrollment ramifications. As an example, Peoples' Amended Petition indicates that *after* auto-enrolling customers, the Company plans send them a "Welcome letter" informing them of the responsibilities and restrictions of CAP, with information on how to opt out of enrollment.³ Peoples' draft Welcome letter does not inform auto-enrolled customers that CAP enrollment will result in a loss of their ability to be awarded a Commission-approved payment arrangement on CAP arrearages.⁴ In short, Peoples' proposal requires auto-enrolled customers to opt-out of programming that could impose significant consequences upon them without any mention of those consequences.

I strongly encourage Peoples to use the additional time now available to revise the CAP enrollment proposal in a manner that enables customers to provide informed consent to participate by opting into enrollment instead of requiring them to unwittingly assume the risks.

March 26, 2026
Date



Stephen M. DeFrank
Chairman

³ Peoples' Amended Petition at ¶ 19 and Exhibit B.

⁴ *Id.* at Exh. B.