

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

**Petition of Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC
to Amend 2019-2024 Universal Service and
Energy Conservation Plan**

**Public Meeting March 26, 2026
3052324-BCS
Docket No. P-2024-3052324**

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JOHN F. COLEMAN, JR.

Before us today is Peoples Natural Gas Company's (Peoples) Amended Petition to amend its Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan to implement the automatic enrollment of Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) recipients with significant balances (*i.e.*, exceeding \$300) into its Customer Assistance Program (CAP).

In general, I do not favor the automatic enrollment of customers into universal service programs. I share the concerns set forth by the Commission's Bureau of Consumer Services in our April 2025 Order, and my concerns have not been alleviated by the subsequent filings in this matter.

For this proposal, if customers can apply annually for a LIHEAP grant, then the same customers can take affirmative steps to apply for a utility's CAP. This Commission has already reduced the administrative burden of applying for both LIHEAP and CAP by encouraging utilities to participate in LIHEAP Data Sharing through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. This Commission also extended the CAP recertification timeframe for LIHEAP recipients from one to three years, further reducing the administrative burden on both customers and utilities.

As we review Peoples' Petition for the third time, with at least one more review to follow, I question if there is a clear, existing need for this proposal. In the 2024-2025 LIHEAP program year, Peoples had 556 non-CAP LIHEAP recipients with balances exceeding \$300. Peoples could simply contact these customers and invite them to apply for CAP under the existing process. Instead, the proposed automatic enrollment of these 556 customers into Peoples' CAP requires new communication materials, new opt-out procedures, new waivers of stay-out provisions, new tracking and reporting requirements, and potentially updates to Peoples' customer information system.

That being said, I do support the result of today's Order, which is to request supplemental information. I am particularly interested in Peoples' estimates of savings which may be realized through the automatic enrollment of LIHEAP customers into its CAP. This Commission is required by statute to ensure that universal service programs are operated in a cost-effective manner. Any expansion of universal service should provide a measurable economic benefit to the ratepayers who pay for these programs.



Date: March 26, 2026

**JOHN F. COLEMAN, JR.
COMMISSIONER**