

**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Cletus Cibrone	:	
	:	
v.	:	F-2025-3058379
	:	
Duquesne Light Company	:	

**INITIAL DECISION**

Before  
Ann Quimby  
Administrative Law Judge

**INTRODUCTION**

This decision dismisses without prejudice the Formal Complaint for the failure of Complainant to appear for the hearing and prosecute the Complaint.

**HISTORY OF THE PROCEEDING**

On October 23, 2025, Cletus Cibrone (Complainant) filed a Formal Complaint (Complaint) with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) against Duquesne Light Company (Respondent)<sup>1</sup>. Ms. Cibrone indicated Respondent was threatening to shut off or did shut off her service, and averred she was harassed by Respondent for flying a Trump/MAGA flag. Complaint ¶ 4.

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<sup>1</sup> The Complaint is a timely appeal of an informal complaint filed at Bureau of Consumer Services (BCS) Number 4089641 and is considered here *de novo*. 52 Pa. Code § 56.173 (a).

In the Complaint, Complainant selected the option to receive all communications from the Commission via First-Class Mail at the address provided by the Complainant on the Complaint. Complaint ¶ 9.

On November 26, 2025, Respondent filed an Answer and New Matter (Answer). Respondent generally denied Complainant's assertions. Respondent averred Complainant was previously issued a termination notice for failure to pay past due amounts, but she did not have an active termination notice on her account as of the date the Answer was filed. Answer ¶ 4. Respondent asserted the doctrine of *res judicata* barred Complainant from making allegations of discrimination, as the Commission has previously determined Respondent did not discriminate against her. Answer ¶ 18. Respondent requested that the Complaint be dismissed with prejudice.

On January 8, 2026, an Initial Telephonic Hearing Notice was served on the parties scheduling an initial telephonic hearing on February 26, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. and the case was assigned to me. The Hearing Notice provided the parties with the Toll-Free Bridge Number and the PIN to call and participate in the telephonic hearing. The Hearing Notice further stated as follows:

**FAILURE TO APPEAR:** You may lose the case if you do not take part in this hearing and present evidence on the issue(s) raised. Your case may be dismissed “with prejudice” which means that you will be barred from filing another complaint raising the same claim(s) and issue(s) presented in the dismissed complaint.

**CONTINUANCES.** You may request a continuance of the hearing if you have a good reason. All continuances will be granted only for good cause. To request a continuance, you must submit a written request (a “motion”) at least five (5) days before the hearing. Your motion should include: 1) The case name, number, and hearing date; 2) The reason for the request; and 3) Whether the other party agrees (or if you do not know).

Also on January 8, 2026, a Prehearing Order was served on the parties which reminded the parties of the date and time of the hearing. The Prehearing Order also stated the potential consequences if a party failed to appear at the hearing. Additionally, the Prehearing Order informed the parties about the applicable procedural rules and again included the procedure to follow for hearing continuances.

The Hearing Notice and Prehearing Order were served on Complainant via U.S. First-Class Mail in the ordinary course of the Commission's business to the postal address that Complainant provided on her Complaint. Neither the Hearing Notice nor the Prehearing Order were returned to the Commission as undeliverable.

On February 26, 2026, I convened the hearing as scheduled. Sophia Al Rasheed, Esquire, appeared on behalf of Respondent along with one witness and was ready to proceed. The court reporter was also present. Complainant was not present at the start of the hearing. After a short recess to allow time for Complainant to appear, the hearing proceeded in Complainant's absence. No testimony was taken, and no exhibits were introduced into the record. At the hearing, Respondent moved to dismiss the Complaint with prejudice due to Complainant's failure to appear and prosecute her Complaint. I took this motion under advisement.

Complainant has not contacted the Commission to explain why her failure to appear at the hearing was unavoidable.

I issued an Order closing the record on March 10, 2026 after the transcript was received. This decision grants Respondent's motion to dismiss the Complaint but without prejudice.

## FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Complainant is Cletus Cibrone.
2. Respondent is Duquesne Light Company.
3. On October 23, 2025, Complainant filed a Formal Complaint against Respondent.
4. On November 26, 2025, Respondent filed an Answer and New Matter to the Complaint.
5. On January 8, 2026, an Initial Telephonic Hearing Notice was served on Complainant scheduling an initial telephonic hearing on February 26, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.
6. On January 8, 2026, a Prehearing Order for Telephone Hearing was served on Complainant providing additional information to the parties regarding the hearing.
7. Both the Hearing Notice and Prehearing Order were served on Complainant by U.S. First-Class Mail to the postal address Complainant provided to the Commission.
8. Both the Hearing Notice and Prehearing Order provided Complainant with the toll-free bridge telephone number and PIN to call and participate in the hearing and, *inter alia*, the procedure for requesting a continuance and the possible consequences of failing to appear at the hearing.

9. Neither the Hearing Notice nor the Prehearing Order were returned to the Commission as undeliverable.

10. Complainant failed to appear and participate in the scheduled telephonic hearing at 10:00 a.m. on February 26, 2026.

11. The court reporter, Counsel for Respondent and its witness were present and prepared to proceed at the February 26, 2026 hearing.

12. Complainant has not contacted the Commission to explain why her failure to appear at the hearing was unavoidable.

## DISCUSSION

### **Due Process and Notice**

Administrative agencies, such as the Commission, are required to provide due process to the parties appearing before them. *Schneider v. Pa. Pub. Util. Comm'n*, 479 A.2d 10 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1984). This due process requirement is satisfied when the parties are provided notice and the opportunity to be heard. *Id.*

The record shows that Complainant was provided notice and the opportunity to be heard. First, on January 8, 2026, the Commission served Complainant a Hearing Notice which advised the parties of the date and time of the hearing, and how to participate. Second, on January 8, 2026, the Commission served Complainant a Prehearing Order which reminded the parties of the date and time of the hearing, and how to participate. Further, both documents advised the parties, *inter alia*, how to request a continuance prior to the hearing if needed. Finally, both documents advised Complainant that failure to appear may result in the dismissal of the Complaint with prejudice, which

means that Complainant would be barred from filing another complaint raising the same claim(s) and issues(s) presented in the dismissed Complaint.

Both the Hearing Notice and Prehearing Order were served by U.S. First-Class Mail to the address provided on the Complaint. Neither document was returned as being undeliverable. Accordingly, it must be presumed that this mail was received by Complainant. *Berkowitz v. Mayflower Sec., Inc.*, 317 A.2d 584 (Pa. 1974); *Meierdierck v. Miller*, 147 A.2d 406 (Pa. 1959); *Samaras v. Hartwick*, 698 A.2d 71 (Pa. Super. 1997); *Judge v. Celina Mut. Ins. Co.*, 449 A.2d 658 (Pa. Super. 1982).

Complainant had notice of the hearing and an opportunity to be heard in this proceeding. Therefore, Complainant's due process rights have been fully protected. *Sentner v. Bell Tel. Co. of Pa.*, Docket No. F-00161106 (Opinion and Order entered Oct.25, 1993).

### **Failure to Appear, Waiver and the "Unavoidable" Standard**

Once a hearing is scheduled and the parties are duly notified by the Commission, it is the responsibility of the parties to appear and participate in the hearing. *Mumma v. PPL Elec. Utils. Corp.*, Docket No. C-00014869 (Opinion and Order entered Jan. 28, 2002). Both the Public Utility Code and the Commission's regulations provide that, after being notified, a party who fails to appear at a scheduled hearing shall be deemed to have waived the opportunity to participate in the hearing and shall not be permitted to later reopen the matter or be permitted to recall excused witnesses. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(f); 52 Pa. Code § 5.245(a). However, these provisions in the Code and in the Commission's regulations do not apply if the presiding officer determines that the party's failure to appear at the hearing was unavoidable and that the interests of the other parties and of the public would not be prejudiced by permitting the reopening or further examination. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(f); 52 Pa. Code § 5.245(b).

The party who failed to appear at the hearing has the burden of explaining why his/her failure to appear was unavoidable. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a); *Herr v. W. Penn Power Co.*, Docket No. C-2021-3028202 (Opinion and Order entered Sept. 15, 2022). When there are no facts in the record that the party's failure to appear was unavoidable, the complaint should be dismissed. *Brown v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2019-3009486 (Opinion and Order entered Apr. 22, 2022); *Little v. Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Auth.*, Docket No. F-2021-3027107 (Opinion and Order entered Feb. 7, 2022); *Williams v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2018-3000734 (Opinion and Order entered Mar. 14, 2019); *Jefferson v. UGI Utils., Inc.*, Docket No. Z-00269892 (Opinion and Order entered Dec. 26, 1995); 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(f); 52 Pa. Code § 5.245(a).

Complainant failed to appear for the hearing despite receiving notice and despite the undersigned allowing additional time for Complainant to appear. To date, there has been no communication to the Office of Administrative Law Judge or me by, or on behalf of, Complainant explaining why Complainant's failure to appear at the hearing was unavoidable.

Consequently, I find that Complainant waived the opportunity to participate in a hearing on the matters raised in the Complaint, Complainant's absence was not unavoidable, and the Complaint should be dismissed.

### **Burden of Proof and Dismissal of Complaint**

Section 332(a) of the Public Utility Code provides that the party seeking relief from the Commission has the burden of proof. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a). To establish a sufficient case and satisfy the burden of proof, a complainant must show that the respondent public utility is responsible or accountable for the problem described in the complaint. *Patterson v. Bell Tel. Co. of Pa.*, 72 Pa.P.U.C. 196 (1990); *Feinstein v. Phila. Suburban Water Co.*, 50 Pa.P.U.C. 300 (1976). Such a showing must be by a

preponderance of the evidence. *Samuel J. Lansberry, Inc. v. Pa. Pub. Util. Comm'n*, 578 A.2d 600 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1990). A preponderance of the evidence is established by presenting evidence more convincing, by even the smallest amount, than that presented by the other party. *Se-Ling Hosiery v. Margulies*, 70 A.2d 854 (Pa. 1950).

As the proponent of any request for relief, Complainant bears the burden of proof. By failing to participate and proffer any evidence to support the Complaint, Complainant has failed to meet this burden. Thus, it is appropriate to dismiss the Complaint. *Brown v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2019-3009486 (Opinion and Order entered Apr. 22, 2022); *Williams v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2018-300734 (Opinion and Order entered Mar. 14, 2019) (citing *Jefferson v. UGI Utils., Inc.*, Docket No. Z-00269892 (Opinion and Order entered Dec. 26, 1995)). Accordingly, the merits of the Complaint will not be addressed.

Respondent's motion to dismiss with prejudice is granted in part, such that the Complaint is dismissed, but without prejudice.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over the subject matter of and the parties to this proceeding. 66 Pa.C.S. § 701.

2. The Commission is required to provide due process to the parties appearing before them; this due process requirement is satisfied when the parties are provided notice and the opportunity to be heard. *Schneider v. Pa. Pub. Util. Comm'n*, 479 A.2d 10 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1984).

3. Notice mailed via U.S. First-Class Mail to a party and not returned to the Commission as undeliverable is presumed received. *Berkowitz v. Mayflower Sec.*,

*Inc.*, 317 A.2d 584 (Pa. 1974); *Meierdierck v. Miller*, 147 A.2d 406 (Pa. 1959); *Samaras v. Hartwick*, 698 A.2d 71 (Pa. Super. 1997); *Judge v. Celina Mut. Ins. Co.*, 449 A.2d 658 (Pa. Super. 1982).

4. After being notified, a party who fails to appear at a scheduled hearing shall be deemed to have waived the opportunity to participate in the hearing and shall not be permitted to later reopen the matter or be permitted to recall excused witnesses. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(f); 52 Pa. Code § 5.245(a).

5. If there are no facts in the record that a party's failure to appear at a hearing was unavoidable, the complaint should be dismissed. *Brown v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2019-3009486 (Opinion and Order entered Apr. 22, 2022); *Little v. Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Auth.*, Docket No. F-2021-3027107 (Opinion and Order entered Feb. 7, 2022); *Williams v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2018-3000734 (Opinion and Order entered Mar. 14, 2019); *Jefferson v. UGI Utils., Inc.*, Docket No. Z-00269892 (Opinion and Order entered Dec. 26, 1995).

6. Complainant's due process rights have been fully protected and Complainant's failure to appear was not unavoidable. *Schneider v. Pa. Pub. Util. Comm'n*, 479 A.2d 10 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1984); 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(f); 52 Pa. Code § 5.245(a).

7. As the party seeking relief, Complainant bears the burden of proof by a preponderance of the evidence. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a); *Se-Ling Hosiery v. Margulies*, 70 A.2d 854 (Pa. 1950).

8. By failing to participate in the hearing and proffer any evidence to support the Complaint, Complainant has failed to meet the burden of proof. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a).

ORDER

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That Duquesne Light Company's motion to dismiss the Formal Complaint with prejudice of Cletus Cibrone, at Docket Number F-2025-3058379, is granted in part such that the Complaint is dismissed and denied in part such that it is dismissed without prejudice.
2. That the Formal Complaint filed by Cletus Cibrone in Cletus Cibrone v. Duquesne Light Company, Docket Number F-2025-3058379, is hereby dismissed without prejudice.
3. That the Secretary's Bureau shall mark Docket No. F-2025-3058379 as closed.

Date: April 22, 2026

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Ann Quimby  
Administrative Law Judge