

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Jenna Panepinto	:	
	:	
v.	:	C-2025-3058334
	:	
FirstEnergy Pennsylvania Electric Company	:	

INITIAL DECISION

Before
Mark A. Hoyer
Deputy Chief Administrative Law Judge

INTRODUCTION

This decision dismisses the Formal Complaint for the failure of Complainant to appear for the hearing and prosecute the Complaint.

HISTORY OF THE PROCEEDING

On November 4, 2025, Jenna Panepinto (Complainant or Ms. Panepinto) filed a Formal Complaint (Complaint) with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission against FirstEnergy Pennsylvania Electric Company (FirstEnergy, the Company, or Respondent). She checked the box averring FirstEnergy was threatening to shut off her

electric service or had already shut off her service. She also checked the box indicating she would like a payment agreement. Complaint ¶ 4.

Regarding service by the Commission, Ms. Panepinto elected to be served by eService.¹ Complaint ¶ 9.

On November 25, 2025, FirstEnergy filed an Answer to the Complaint, *inter alia*, denying the material averments made in the Complaint.

On December 8, 2025, the Commission issued an Initial Telephonic Hearing Notice scheduling an evidentiary hearing for February 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. before Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Emily DeVoe.

The Hearing Notice provided the parties with the Toll-Free Bridge Number and the PIN to call and participate in the telephonic hearing and explained how to request a continuance and the consequences for failing to appear.

¹ When Complainant registered for an eFiling account she agreed to the following terms and conditions:

I agree that I will accept electronic service in the Commission proceeding in which I am a party of record. By creating this account, notification of filings via electronic mail shall constitute valid service of Commission documents. I understand that such electronic service of any and all documents will be substituted for service by mail. I agree to be served via email with all subsequent filings. I agree that email notices will be sent on the same day the document is posted.

By clicking on the ‘Create Account’ button below, [I am] agreeing to all the Terms and Agreements listed above.

eFiling Registration Page, <https://efiling.puc.pa.gov/Accounts/Create?accountType=I> (last visited Jan. 2, 2026).

On December 8, 2025, ALJ DeVoe issued a Prehearing Order for Telephone Hearing which reminded the parties of the date and time of the hearing and informed the parties about the applicable procedural rules. The Prehearing Order also stated the potential consequences if a party failed to appear at the hearing and included the procedure to follow to request a continuance.

The Hearing Notice and Prehearing Order were eServed on Complainant, consistent with her election on the Complaint.

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

On December 15, 2025, the Commission issued a Rescheduled Initial Telephonic Hearing Notice cancelling the evidentiary hearing scheduled for February 25, 2026, and rescheduling it for March 4, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. before ALJ Emily DeVoe.

The Second Hearing Notice 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).

On December 15, 2025, ALJ DeVoe issued a Second Prehearing Order for Telephone Hearing which reminded the parties of the date and time of the rescheduled hearing and informed the parties about the applicable procedural rules. The Second Prehearing Order also stated the potential consequences if a party failed to appear at the hearing and included the procedure to follow to request a continuance.

The Second Hearing Notice and Second Prehearing Order were eServed on Complainant, consistent with her election on the Complaint.

Neither the Second Hearing Notice nor the Second Prehearing Order were returned as undeliverable.

On March 4, 2026, ALJ DeVoe was unavailable and the undersigned presided over the scheduled hearing. Margaret A. Morris, Esquire, was present on behalf of FirstEnergy 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, and the hearing proceeded in Complainant's absence. No testimony was taken, and no exhibits were introduced into the record. At the hearing, FirstEnergy moved to dismiss the Complaint with prejudice due to Complainant's failure to appear and prosecute her Complaint. Transcript (Tr.) 9. I took the Company's motion under advisement. *Id.*

On March 5, 2026, a Judge Change Notice was eServed on the parties reassigning this matter to the undersigned.

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

The Transcript was filed on March 9, 2026, and is ten pages in length.

The record closed on March 10, 2026, by interim order.

This decision grants the Respondent's motion to dismiss the Complaint, but without prejudice.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Complainant is Jenna Panepinto.
2. Respondent is FirstEnergy Pennsylvania Electric Company.
3. On November 4, 2025, Complainant filed a Formal Complaint against Respondent.
4. In her Complaint, regarding service by the Commission, Complainant elected to be served by eService. Complaint ¶ 4.
5. On November 25, 2025, Respondent filed an Answer to the Complaint.
6. On December 8, 2025, the First Hearing Notice was served on Complainant scheduling an initial telephonic hearing for February 25, 2026.
7. On December 8, 2025, the First Prehearing Order was served on Complainant providing additional information to the parties regarding the hearing.
8. Both the First Hearing Notice and First Prehearing Order were eServed on Complainant, consistent with her election on the Complaint.

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

10. On December 15, 2025, the Commission issued a Second Hearing Notice, rescheduling the hearing for March 4, 2026.

11. On December 15, 2025, the Second Prehearing Order was served on Complainant providing additional information to the parties regarding the hearing.

12. Both the Second Hearing Notice and Second Prehearing Order were eServed on Complainant consistent with her election on the Complaint.

13. Neither the Second Hearing Notice nor the Second Prehearing Order were returned as undeliverable.

14. The March 4, 2026 hearing convened as scheduled.

15. Complainant failed to appear and participate in the scheduled telephonic hearing on March 4, 2026.

16. The court reporter, counsel for Respondent, and its witness were present and prepared to proceed at the March 4, 2026 hearing.

17. Complainant has not contacted the Commission to explain why her failure to appear at the March 4, 2026 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. On December 8, 2025, the Commission eServed the First Hearing Notice on Complainant. The First Hearing Notice advised the parties of the date and time of the hearing, and how to participate. On December 8, 2025, the Commission eServed the First Prehearing Order on Complainant, reminding 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.

The initial hearing was subsequently rescheduled. The record shows that on December 15, 2025, the Commission eServed the Second Hearing Notice on Complainant, which advised the parties of the date and time of the rescheduled hearing, and how to participate. On December 15, 2025, the Commission eServed the Second Prehearing Order on Complainant which reminded the parties of the date and time of the hearing, and how to participate. Both documents advised the parties, *inter alia*, how to request a continuance prior to the hearing if needed. Both documents also advised Complainant that failure to appear may result in the dismissal of the Complaint.

None of the documents served on Complainant were returned to the Commission as undeliverable. Notice eServed to a party's registered email address with no notification that service failed is presumed to have been received. *Hu v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2019-3012075 (Order entered Dec. 19, 2019); *Zirkel v. Phila. Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2016-2561176 (Final Order entered Apr. 7, 2017); *Morella v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2016-2553416 (Final Order entered Jan. 31, 2017).

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. West 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 March 4, 2026 hearing despite receiving notice. To date, there has been no communication to the Office of Administrative Law Judge or me by, or on behalf of, Complainant explaining why her 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 and Complainant's absence was not unavoidable.

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. Accordingly, the merits of the Complaint will not be addressed.

Respondent's motion to dismiss the Complaint with prejudice will be granted in part and denied in part. The motion will be granted in that the Complaint is dismissed, and the motion is denied in that the Complaint is dismissed 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 eServed to a party's registered email address with no notification that service failed to be delivered to that email address is presumed to have been received. *Hu v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2019-3012075 (Order entered Dec. 19, 2019); *Zirkel v. Phila. Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2016-2561176 (Final Order entered Apr. 7, 2017); *Morella v. PECO Energy Co.*, Docket No. C-2016-2553416 (Final Order entered Jan. 31, 2017).

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. 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).

6. 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).

7. 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 FirstEnergy Pennsylvania Electric Company's motion to dismiss with prejudice the Formal Complaint of Jenna Panepinto, at Docket Number C-2025-3058334, is granted in part and denied in part.

