

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

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

**Public Meeting of September 10, 2026
3003177-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 2019-2024 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) related to its Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan (USECP) for 2019-2024 (Amended Petition). Peoples' Amended Petition was before this Commission on March 26, 2026, but the Commission withheld consideration pending further clarification. The Commission's need for clarification largely centered around Peoples' proposal to initiate auto-enrollment of Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) recipients with significant balances into its Customer Assistance Program (CAP).

Back in March, I issued a Statement urging Peoples to modify the CAP auto-enrollment proposal by requiring customers to affirmatively opt-in to participate instead of opting out after enrollment already occurred without their consent. 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.¹ I also stressed the importance of ensuring that customers are empowered to give their informed consent to CAP enrollment rather than to have that decision made for them, especially when financial consequences could result.

¹ 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 remain firm in my belief that *utility customers*, not utility companies, should make consequential CAP enrollment decisions —no matter how well-intentioned the companies' auto-enrollment proposals may be. I am pleased to see that Peoples now proposes to remove the CAP auto-enrollment proposal in favor of adopting a streamlined, proactive approach that fully informs customers. The Company will now, with customers' consent, access LIHEAP data shared by the Department of Human Services to help identify vulnerable customers who previously received LIHEAP and who have gas account balances in excess of \$300. Peoples will provide these identified customers with materials that explain not only the CAP enrollment benefits, but also that: (1) failure to pay the CAP amount due each month may render them ineligible for a Commission-approved payment arrangement of those arrears; and (2) they would no longer be permitted to purchase gas supplies from an alternate natural gas supplier if enrolled in CAP.

I commend Peoples for working to make CAP more accessible to those in need through an opt-in framework that empowers customers to make their own enrollment decisions. For these reasons, I support the Company's Amended Petition, and I am voting to approve it today.

September 10, 2026
Date



Stephen M. DeFrank
Chairman