

Jacob Veagh

From: Jacob Veagh on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 10:58 AM
To: 'Rivera, Andrea Maria'
Cc: Consumer Contact
Subject: RE: Docket Nos:20200053, 20200054, 20200055, and 20200056

Good Afternoon, Andrea Rivera

We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket Nos. 20200053, 20200054, 20200055, and 20200056 and forwarding your comments to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

Jacob Veagh

Commission Deputy Clerk I
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From: Rivera, Andrea Maria <amr454@miami.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 12:53 AM
To: Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>
Subject: Docket Nos:20200053, 20200054, 20200055, and 20200056

Dear Commissioners:

You have an important decision before you tomorrow, July 7th when you consider approval of proposed energy efficiency programs for the state's biggest power companies – including efficiency programs for low-income customers.

The year 2020 is already on track to be the world's hottest on record. With the heart of summer fast approaching, the communities confronting the highest COVID-19 infection and death rates, the worst hardships from the ongoing economic crisis will have to contend with yet another public health threat: heat waves.

Heat waves are responsible for more deaths than any other weather-related event in the United States. And as our planet continues to warm, they are only projected to become more frequent and more intense. Without further action to reduce heat-trapping gas emissions, the average number of days per year with temperatures above 105 degrees Fahrenheit is expected to quadruple by midcentury. One model found that, under a high-emissions scenario, U.S. heat-related deaths from 2031 to 2050 would be 57 percent higher than they were from 1971 to 2000.

Most at risk to these increases in extreme heat are low-income communities, tribal communities, and communities of color. These are the same groups of people who endure disproportionate levels of environmental pollution from power plants, industrial facilities, diesel trucks, landfills, and pesticides. They are the people who—without equal access to affordable and quality health

care—have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. The recurring threats to health, safety, and quality of life in these communities are not a coincidence but rather the compounding symptoms of systemic racial and economic inequities within the United States.

Protecting communities from heat morbidity and mortality therefore requires a comprehensive understanding of such inequities as well as the enactment of intentionally designed policy and large-scale investments in equitable and just community development.

Given the economic fallout from the COVID-19 crisis and the high energy burden our low-income neighbors are suffering, we must place an even greater value on cutting energy waste. After all, it's the cheapest, quickest and cleanest way to meet our energy needs. As people stay home during the pandemic and resultant economic recession, utility bills are rising, and household incomes are falling. More families are being forced to choose between cooling their homes and paying for necessities such as food, medicine, and child care.

It is unconscionable that PSC staff is recommending scaling back proposed programs. I strongly oppose this shortsighted recommendation. Instead, I urge you to direct the utilities to expand programs to meet the needs of the many hard-working Florida families.

The staff's recommendation would block proposed programs that are proven to deliver real savings to customers and are, in fact, readily available all across the country. Even further off the mark, the recommendation that low-income programs be scaled back is particularly cruel. With Covid-19 and the economic downturn, helping customers slash unaffordable energy bills is more important than ever. During a long and blistering heat wave, having access to these resources can be the difference between life and death. Now is not the time to abandon our families.

Therefore, I ask that you reject your staff's recommendation and ensure that each utility is putting forth robust energy efficiency programs – especially for its most vulnerable customers.

Thank you,
Andrea Rivera

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