



June 21, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Adam J. Teitzman  
Office of Commission Clerk  
Florida Public Service Commission  
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850

**Re: Docket No. 20210015-EI - Petition for rate increase by Florida Power Light & Company.**

Dear Mr. Teitzman,

On behalf of Intervenor Florida Rising, I have enclosed the testimony of Andrea Mercado. Please file these documents in Docket No. 20210015-EI. Please contact me if there are any questions regarding this filing.

*/s/ Bradley Marshall*

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## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true copy and correct copy of the foregoing was served on this 21st day of June 2021, via electronic mail on:

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DATED this 21st day of June, 2021.

/s/ Bradley Marshall  
Attorney

**BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**In re:   Petition for rate increase    )**  
          **by Florida Power & Light        )**     **DOCKET NO. 20210015-EI**  
          **Company                            )**

**DIRECT TESTIMONY**  
**OF ANDREA MERCADO**  
**ON BEHALF OF**  
**FLORIDA RISING**

June 21, 2021

1 **Q. Please state your name.**

2 A. Andrea Mercado.

3 **Q. What organization are you speaking on behalf of?**

4 A. Florida Rising.

5 **Q. Where is the organization located?**

6 A. 10800 Biscayne Blvd, Suite 1050, Miami, FL 33161.

7 **Q. How long have you been involved in the organization?**

8 A. I've been Executive Director of Florida Rising since it was renamed from New Florida  
9 Majority this past year and before the rename was Executive Director of New Florida  
10 Majority since 2017.

11 **Q. What are your duties in that position?**

12 A. I lead organizational strategy, coordinate fundraising, evaluate the organization's impact,  
13 and act as an organizational spokesperson.

14 **Q. What does your organization think of FPL?**

15 A. Florida Rising recognizes that FPL provides an important service but that it is granted a  
16 privileged status by the Legislature, which should instead be advancing the needs of the  
17 people it represents.

18 **Q. Based on information provided by FPL, the base rate for electricity is projected to**  
19 **increase by about 20%. How would FPL's proposed rate increase impact the members**  
20 **of your organization? How do you know?**

21 A. The rate increase would impact the thousands of our members who receive low or fixed  
22 incomes. Many members are facing financial hardships and struggle to afford necessary  
23 goods and services, like childcare and food. I personally know that many members would not  
24 be able to afford the rate increase because I talk with Florida Rising members on a regular  
25 basis.

1 **Q. Is your organization concerned about climate change?**

2 A. Yes. It is the most significant crisis we face because the impacts of climate change  
3 disproportionately harm the historically marginalized communities that Florida Rising  
4 represents. Rising temperatures in our region are a major concern for our members, many of  
5 whom work outdoors or don't have access to air conditioning. Because climate change is  
6 increasing the severity of storms, our members will likely experience more power outages.  
7 Our members disproportionately suffer during outages because many members do not have a  
8 vehicle or the means to leave to a different region. Florida Rising uses much of its resources  
9 educating members about emergency preparedness and advocating for equitable climate  
10 policies in order to protect human life.

11 **Q: Based on information provided by FPL, part of this rate increase will pay for new or**  
12 **upgraded methane gas power plants. Does your organization believe this will have an**  
13 **impact on the climate?**

14 A. Yes. These plants will emit greenhouse gases that will lead to further climate  
15 change. FPL describes these plants as "clean," even though the plants still emit carbon  
16 dioxide and though there is a potential for methane, an extremely powerful greenhouse gas,  
17 to leak into the atmosphere during extraction, transportation, or energy production. Also,  
18 such power plants are usually located in historically marginalized communities, and their  
19 emissions often harm the health of community members. Florida Rising members protested  
20 FPL's construction of a power plant in Dania Beach due to the negative impacts it would  
21 have on their health and on the climate.

22 **Q: How does your organization feel about contributing its own money to those projects,**  
23 **through its FPL bill?**

24 A. It is extremely problematic. FPL should only invest in solar and other forms of zero-  
25 emission renewable energy because now is the time to move completely away from fossil

1 fuel generation. We live in a state where the sun shines over 300 days a year, which means  
2 FPL could be on the cutting edge of solar. However, FPL still produces a majority of its  
3 energy from gas, further aggravating the climate crisis.

4 **Q. What is the mission of your organization?**

5 A. The mission of Florida Rising is to build broader multiracial movements with individuals  
6 from historically marginalized communities to seize power and govern to advance social,  
7 economic, and racial justice.

8 **Q. How is the purpose of your organization being served by participating in this  
9 proceeding?**

10 A. By participating in this proceeding, we are advancing social, economic, and racial justice  
11 for the communities we represent. Preventing FPL's rate increase is economic justice  
12 because a majority of our members would face extreme hardship in having to pay about 20%  
13 more for their electricity. Low-income people of color, the people who Florida Rising  
14 represents, already have the heaviest energy burdens. Moreover, members should not have to  
15 pay the rate increase when FPL will use some of that extra revenue to invest in unnecessary  
16 fossil fuel generation, which will contribute to further exacerbate climate change, which  
17 again disproportionately impacts low-income communities of color. By preventing these  
18 investments in fossil fuel generation, Florida Rising is advancing social and racial justice  
19 because the health and safety of our members would be disproportionately impacted by  
20 further climate change.

21 **Q. Will a substantial number of your organization's members be substantially affected  
22 by the Commission's decision in this proceeding? How do you know?**

23 A. Yes. A majority of our members live in areas that are serviced by FPL. Because most of  
24 our members come from low-income underserved communities, FPL's rate increase would  
25 place an extremely heavy financial burden on our members. I know that members would be

1 substantially negatively impacted because our organization has monthly meetings with  
2 members, who often tell me that they are struggling to pay their bills.

3 **Q. How is the subject matter of this proceeding within your organization’s general**  
4 **scope of interest and activity?**

5 A. Florida Rising advocates for the needs of historically marginalized groups, who will be  
6 disproportionately impacted by the proposed rate increase.

7 **Q. Why is the relief requested in this proceeding appropriate for your organization to**  
8 **receive on behalf of its members?**

9 A. Most of Florida Rising’s members, who survive on low incomes, would not be able to  
10 intervene individually in this proceeding because of the time commitment and legal costs  
11 required. For this reason, Florida Rising has intervened to represent the interests of its  
12 members. Our organization advocates on behalf of communities that have historically borne  
13 the brunt of policy decisions. Florida Rising members should not be forced to shoulder the  
14 burden of the rate hike when they are cut off from millions of dollars from federal  
15 unemployment benefits and recovering from a pandemic.

16 **Q. How has your organization engaged with utility matters in the past?**

17 A. Florida Rising has participated in various proceedings at the Public Service Commission:  
18 Docket Nos. 20190015-EG, 20190016-EG, 20190018-EG, 20190020-EG, 20190021-EG, *In*  
19 *re: Commission review of numeric conservation goals*, Docket No. 20200219-EI, *In re:*  
20 *Petition to initiate emergency rulemaking to prevent electric utility shutoffs, by League of*  
21 *United Latin American Citizens, Zoraida Santana, and Jesse Moody*; and Docket No.  
22 202000181-EU, *In re: Proposed amendment of Rule 25-17.0021, F.A.C., Goals for Electric*  
23 *Utilities*. Outside of these proceedings, Florida Rising organized protests in 2018 against  
24 FPL’s Dania Beach power plants, which would negatively impact the health of the  
25 surrounding low-income community. Additionally, Florida Rising has provided financial



1 support to members who faced the threat of utility disconnection.

2 **Q. Why has it done so?**

3 A. Utility decisions relating to customer costs and to the environmental impact of energy  
4 infrastructure disproportionately impact low-income communities of color. Therefore,  
5 engaging in these energy issues is one way Florida Rising is working to accomplish its core  
6 mission to advance social, economic, and racial justice.

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