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BEFORE THE
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

DOCKET NO. 20240026-EI

Petition for rate increase
by Tampa Electric Company.
_____ /

PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING

COMMISSIONERS
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN MIKE LA ROSA
COMMISSIONER ART GRAHAM
COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK
COMMISSIONER ANDREW GILES FAY
COMMISSIONER GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO

DATE: Thursday, June 13, 2024

TIME: Commenced: 10:00 a.m.
Concluded: 1:00 p.m.

PLACE: Hillsborough Community College
Brandon Campus
BADM 116/117
10451 Nancy Watkins Drive
Tampa, Florida

TRANSCRIBED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK
Court Reporter and
Notary Public in and for
the State of Florida at Large

PREMIER REPORTING
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
(850) 894-0828

1 APPEARANCES:

2 J. JEFFREY WAHLEN, ESQUIRE, Tampa Electric
3 Company, 123 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, Florida
4 32301; appearing on behalf of Tampa Electric Company
5 (TECO).

6 WALT TRIERWEILER, PUBLIC COUNSEL; OCTAVIO
7 PONCE and AUSTIN WATROUS, ESQUIRES, OFFICE OF PUBLIC
8 COUNSEL, c/o The Florida Legislature, 111 West Madison
9 Street, Room 812, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1400,
10 appearing on behalf of the Citizens of the State of
11 Florida (OPC.).

12 ROBERT SCHEFFEL WRIGHT, ESQUIRE, 1300
13 Thomaswood Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32308; appearing
14 on behalf of Florida Retail Federation (FRF).

15 JON C. MOYLE, ESQUIRE, Moyle Law Firm, 118
16 North Gadsden Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301;
17 appearing on behalf of Florida Industrial Power Users
18 Group (FIPUG).

19 BRADLEY MARSHALL, ESQUIRE, Earthjustice, 111
20 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Tallahassee,
21 Florida 32301; appearing on behalf of Florida Rising
22 (Florida Rising) and League of United Latin American
23 Citizens of Florida (LULAC).

24

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1 APPEARANCES CONTINUED:

2 CARLOS MARQUEZ and TIMOTHY SPARKS, ESQUIRES,
3 FPSC General Counsel's Office, 2540 Shumard Oak
4 Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, appearing on
5 behalf of the Florida Public Service Commission (Staff).

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Welcome to this customer
3 service hearing, as part of the review by Tampa
4 Electric Company's request for a rate adjustment.
5 Today's service hearing is an important part of the
6 process and is dedicated to hearing from you, the
7 customer.

8 My name is Mike La Rosa. I have the privilege
9 of serving as the Chairman of the Florida Public
10 Service Commission. Along with me are a few of my
11 Commissioners, which I am going to give, in a few
12 seconds here, the opportunity to introduce
13 themselves.

14 I just wanted to say a quick thank you to
15 Hillsborough Community College for giving us the
16 opportunity to host this meeting here, a little bit
17 of a road show for us, of course, coming from
18 Tallahassee, being able to set up audio and video,
19 and all the things necessary to be able to, of
20 course, host the community and still be able to
21 broadcast on-line.

22 We do have a Spanish interpreter here today.
23 We are going to interpret important sections of
24 today's meeting. I just wanted to ask a quick
25 question, maybe take a quick survey by hand. Are

1 there any Spanish speakers or individuals that need
2 a Spanish translation that are here today just
3 maybe by simply raising your hand?

4 If you don't mind, Mr. Interpreter, do you
5 mind just kind of repeating that in Spanish?

6 INTERPRETER: Okay.

7 (Interpreter translating in Spanish.)

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

9 So there is no Spanish speakers here today, or
10 at least anyone needing interpretation. If there
11 are, of course our interpreter is here and will
12 continue to interpret the opening statements, of
13 course, this meeting is being broadcast.

14 Before we get officially started, I just
15 wanted to pass the microphone off to my fellow
16 Commissioners allow them an opportunity to
17 introduce themselves.

18 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Good morning. My name
19 is Art Graham, and I am one of your five
20 Commissioners on the Public Service Commission.

21 I want to welcome everybody here this morning.
22 This is the customer hearing, and this hearing is
23 for you, the customers. We want to hear from you.
24 We want to hear the facts as you know them. We
25 want to hear your testimony on what you think about

1 the rate case with TECO. We want to hear the good.
2 We want to hear the bad. We want to hear the ugly.

3 A little policing matter. I guess my job up
4 here is kind of like the time management police,
5 and you got to sick back and think, we got, like,
6 36, 40 people right here now to speak. If
7 everybody speaks for five-minutes, that's going to
8 be over, like, four hours.

9 Now, it's okay, and you guys have the time and
10 we are here for that, but if you heard something
11 already, it's okay when you get to the microphone
12 to say ditto, or to say, I agree with what I've
13 heard before.

14 We don't need to hear what they are asking
15 for. We know the facts -- we know the facts of the
16 case. We know the ROE they are asking for. That's
17 all competitive. Tell us your testimony. I mean,
18 tell us why you think they are cutting too much
19 trees. Tell us why you think it's great that they
20 support, like, the local soccer team. Tell us the
21 good. Tell us the bad. Tell us it everything.
22 But it's not necessary to be repetitive, because if
23 you sit back and think about it, you guys are
24 policing yourselves, and the person that's number
25 30 on the list, he is going to be speaking sometime

1 after lunch. If you just have something to say,
2 say it and be succinct about it. But we are here
3 for you and we want to hear what you have to say.

4 Thank you very much.

5 COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you.

6 My name is Gary Clark. Also one of your
7 Public Service Commissioners, and just echo the
8 sentiments from Commissioner Graham.

9 And just a reminder as well, there seem to be
10 some confusion in a couple of our areas about the
11 role that we, as the Commission, plays and I would
12 just remind you that we did not submit the request
13 for the rate increase. It is submitted by the
14 utility company. We are the ones that make the
15 decision. So it's not us that have proposed the
16 ideas and the themes that you have heard. We are
17 the ones that are going to adjudicate whether or
18 not this rate increase is approved, so just keep
19 that in perspective if you would, please, when you
20 are making your presentations to us today.

21 And thank you very much for taking time out of
22 your schedules to be here. I know it's a
23 sacrifice. A lot of you have probably taken time
24 off of your jobs today to be here. You have taken
25 commitments away from your families to be here, and

1 that is very important to us. It does not go
2 unrecognized, so thank you for being here.

3 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO: Thank you.

4 My name is Gabriella Passidomo. I am another
5 one of your five Public Service Commissioners. I,
6 again, would like to thank all of you for taking
7 the time. We know that it is a sacrifice, but we
8 really do appreciate your comments.

9 I want to add to what my colleagues have said.
10 We also, if you, you know, want to add more to your
11 testimony, there is opportunities throughout this
12 case to be able to submit written comments to our
13 offices, and we do review each of those
14 individually. We assess them, and they go into our
15 ultimate decision. So those are just as valuable
16 as your -- as your comments here today. So if
17 there is -- you want to keep it short and sweet but
18 there is a lot more you want to add, please feel
19 free to reach out to our -- to the Commission and
20 submit written comments.

21 Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER FAY: My name is Andrew Fay. I
23 am honored to be here and to serve on this
24 commission. I do want to also thank everyone for
25 taking the time to be here. We recognize this is

1 not always easy, and what you have to say for this
2 rate case is extremely important to us, and so I
3 appreciate you making the time.

4 And with that, Mr. Chairman, I will turn it
5 back to you.

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Commissioners.

7 Mr. Marquez, will you please read the notice?

8 MR. MARQUEZ: Good morning, Commissioners.

9 By notice published May 24th, 2024, this time
10 and place was set for a customer service hearing in
11 Docket No. 20240026-EI. The purpose of the hearing
12 is set forth more fully in the notice.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Mr. Marquez.

14 Let's move to appearances, starting with TECO,
15 Tampa Electric Company.

16 MR. WAHLEN: Good morning, Commissioners. I
17 am Jeff Wahlen with the Ausley McMullen Law Firm in
18 Tallahassee. I have with me today Penelope Rusk,
19 who is Vice-President Regulatory, and Karen
20 Sparkman, who is Vice-President Customer Experience
21 at Tampa Electric Company, and we are glad to be
22 here.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

25 Office of Public Counsel.

1 MR. TRIERWEILER: Good morning. I am Walt
2 Trierweiler, the Public Counsel. And I am going to
3 -- excuse me for turning my back, but I have got a
4 couple of administrative things I would like to
5 share with you throughout this proceeding.

6 First of all, I just want to tell you how
7 proud I am to be your Public Counsel. And also how
8 incredibly proud I am to see you show up and speak
9 for your community. I think that's awesome. I
10 know that there is a lot of people who wanted to be
11 here, couldn't be here, and you are speaking for
12 them as well. And I really appreciate this action
13 of citizenship on your behalf to champion not only
14 your families, but also your communities, and the
15 citizens of the state of Florida.

16 In this process, you are here to provide
17 evidence, evidentiary testimony about your
18 situation and how these things impact you. The
19 Commission is not here to answer any of your
20 questions. They are here to listen and to learn.
21 While you instruct them with your virtual
22 experiences and your opinions, try to stay on
23 topic.

24 There were some questions about who these
25 people are, you know, why they sit on the

1 Commission, why are they fit to judge and determine
2 a rate case. Well, I will tell you that they can't
3 answer those questions. They can't answer any
4 questions about the rate case because this is
5 pre-decisional. It would be inappropriate for them
6 to speak on these issues because they haven't heard
7 all the evidence, and they can't render any
8 opinions at this time.

9 So you may have questions that you would like
10 answered. They can't answer them for you. You can
11 -- you can state that you have those questions, but
12 they can't answer them. But I did want to let you
13 know who you have in the room.

14 The Commission itself, every member there has
15 devoted their life to public service. Before they
16 came here, they did other things that distinguished
17 themselves in public service. The Chairman, Mike
18 La Rosa, was a state representative.

19 We have an engineer, one engineer,
20 Commissioner Graham, who has the most institutional
21 knowledge up there on the panel. He is the only
22 engineer. He distinguished himself in Jacksonville
23 as a civic leader, and was invited to come to
24 Tallahassee.

25 We have two attorneys, Andrew Fay. He

1 distinguished himself in the Attorney General's
2 Office and was asked to come, and has served as
3 Chairman.

4 The Junior member, Commissioner Passidomo,
5 served as a bright young attorney in the office of
6 -- in the Public Service Commission office as a
7 staff attorney. She, as a Junior member, also
8 speaks with that voice that resonates with our
9 younger customers, when she has questions when she
10 speaks, it resonates with them. And I will point
11 out that we've had more young participation in
12 these service hearings than we typically have.

13 I appreciate the Red Brigade. I appreciate
14 y'all coming out, but you got to admit that when
15 the young people get involved, that's really
16 important and good to see.

17 Commissioner Clark, you would never know it to
18 look at him, but he is an industry expert who
19 started his career in this industry as a person who
20 went home to home and did energy audits for people
21 out in the rural community, he showed them, guided
22 them what they could do to save energy and reduce
23 their power bill.

24 Even counsel for the utility here, you know,
25 he got his start decades, I am an Army veteran,

1 Army retired, but he served as school board as
2 attorney for many decades, and I thought I had
3 customer service. I thought I had -- I had served.

4 But I thought it was important for you to know
5 that the remainder of these people here started a
6 life of public service, and that's why they are
7 here. You are here to persuade. You are here to
8 inform, but that's who they are.

9 These two gentlemen over here are the two
10 attorneys in my office. Octavio Ponce is the
11 Junior attorney in the Tampa Electric, and Austin
12 Watrous is the Junior attorney in the Duke rate
13 case. They have been working together because the
14 senior attorneys of the two attorney teams are back
15 in Tallahassee preparing for hearing. So they are
16 on the road. I am with them. And that's pretty
17 much our office.

18 Our office represents you. Let's talk about
19 this process. Let's have people, when they are on
20 deck -- and we will discuss this more and later.
21 But if you are not speaking but you are the next to
22 speak, please queue up right here in this dark line
23 in the carpet so that we can keep things going. If
24 you need to sit down while you wait, after the
25 Commissioner -- welcome, Commissioner -- after the

1 Commissioners present, let's go ahead and have the
2 people if they need to seat and they are next, come
3 up and sit next to me so we can get the -- keep
4 this thing rolling.

5 One reason why I pointed out the public
6 service is, you know, we fight like heck in the
7 hearing room, our -- we try to be civil with each
8 other outside. Civility is an important part of
9 this process, I know that some of you may be upset.
10 Some of you may be tapping into some -- some very
11 strong emotions. That's fine. But remember, you
12 are trying to persuade the people up here who have
13 yet to make the decision, and it's hard hearing you
14 if you start throwing rocks at them, or at anyone
15 else. So try to be civil. Try to be specific and,
16 therefore, being more persuasive and a good steward
17 of the time that's been given to you.

18 We want to hear from you, but as Commissioner
19 Graham so wisely said, you know, keep it on topic.
20 Be specific. And let's give -- keep this process
21 moving so that everyone gets an opportunity to
22 share.

23 I think that's more than I have ever said in
24 one of these things, so, you know, if you have
25 questions afterwards, please come see me or one of

1 my -- one of my attorneys up here. You can talk to
2 Commission staff. They have a wonderful website
3 with a lot of information.

4 If you want to know what's going on with the
5 case, I don't talk to media, read the case style.
6 Read the case style, and you will see what's going
7 on. You will see the battles that we fought and
8 have yet to be fought, and you can come and be more
9 informed about the process.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Mr. Trierweiler.

12 I did hear Octavio Ponce and Austin Watrous'
13 names, so I assume that's an appearance for them
14 being here as well.

15 MR. TRIERWEILER: That's correct.

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

17 Florida Rising.

18 MR. MARSHALL: Bradley Marshall and Jordan
19 Luebkekmann on behalf of Florida Rising and League
20 of United Latin American Citizens of Florida,
21 better known as LULAC.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Staff.

24 MR. MARQUEZ: Carls Marquez, and I am going to
25 enter an appearance for my colleague right next to

1 me, Timothy Sparks.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, counsel.

3 Let me begin by saying thank you again to all
4 of you that have come out here today. You know, I
5 know to make time in your busy schedule is not
6 easy. Again, this is an important aspect of the
7 Tampa Electric rate adjustment case.

8 In August, there will be a technical hearing
9 where the Commission will hear witness testimony,
10 receive evidence on the case. I encourage you all
11 to watch the hearing on our website. This will
12 help you better understand our process, and
13 ultimately how we make decisions.

14 And this is a meeting that will be
15 transcribed. It will become part of the official
16 record. You have heard that -- those words uttered
17 a few times, also the words testimony, right? So
18 it's all part of the rate case. As such, I will
19 swear you in before you share your comments if you
20 have not already been sworn in.

21 Please note that your comments will also be
22 subject to cross-examination. Meaning that you may
23 be asked questions by one of the parties that are
24 here. You may be asked questions by one of the
25 Commissioners. By no means is that intended to be

1 intimidating, just to make sure that we hear you
2 correctly and, of course, that is part of the
3 official -- official record.

4 In addition to sharing your comments here, you
5 may also provide comments on additional material
6 and through traditional mail or email. I know that
7 Commissioner Passidomo mentioned that. The contact
8 -- or to contact the Commission by mail, you can
9 find a pre-addressed comment card for download on
10 our website. You can email us at
11 clerk@psc.state.fl.us. Again, that's
12 clerk@psc.state.fl.us. Please reference the docket
13 number. The docket number for this case is
14 20240026-EI. Again, that's 20240026-EI. Please
15 place that in the subject line so that we make sure
16 that the Clerk gets it to the right place.

17 Whether your comments are made verbally today
18 or whether they are received in writing, be assured
19 that your comments will be received and considered
20 in the evaluation of this case.

21 If you need to speak with Commission staff,
22 Ms. Penelope Buys from our engineering division is
23 here today, along with technical staff and legal
24 staff. So if you need clarifications or questions,
25 please make -- be sure to address them while you

1 are here on-site.

2 Lastly, if you would like to speak to Tampa
3 Electric Company's customer service representative,
4 Ms. Karen Sparkman is here to assist you, and we
5 can further direct you as you come with your
6 testimony.

7 I will pause there for translation.

8 (Interpreter translating in Spanish.)

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

10 Let's move towards opening statements of the
11 parties. The parties are allowed three minutes for
12 opening statements. Let's start with Tampa
13 Electric Company.

14 MS. SPARKMAN: Good morning, Commissioners,
15 and ladies and gentlemen. I am Karen Sparkman, the
16 Vice-President of Customer Experience for Tampa
17 Electric Company.

18 Information about our request has been
19 provided and is readily available on our website,
20 so I will not be going over it again here.

21 I do want to say that we do want to hear from
22 our customers and we appreciate the opportunity to
23 participate in this hearing today. We are
24 available to help. If you have any specific
25 questions regarding our request for a rate

1 increase, or have questions about your electric
2 bill or other service concerns, please call this
3 number, which is 1(800)272-3172, where we have
4 staff available and standing by right now to
5 address any questions.

6 Thank you.

7 (Interpreter translating in Spanish.)

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Office of Public Counsel.

9 MR. PONCE: Good morning. My name is Octavio
10 Ponce, and I have the privilege of representing
11 probably most, if not all of you, through the
12 Office of Public Counsel.

13 For those of you who are not aware of who our
14 office is, we are an office created by the
15 Legislature to represent you, the customers of
16 TECO, in this -- in this proceeding.

17 We are here today because TECO has filed a
18 request for a large base increase in their
19 revenues. If their petition is granted, TECO will
20 receive a base rate increase of 296 million
21 beginning in January 1 of 2025. On top of that,
22 TECO is also requesting subsequent year adjustments
23 for 2026 and 2027 of approximately \$100 million and
24 \$71 million respectively.

25 TECO is also asking for a return on equity of

1 11.5 percent, which this is a bit of an
2 oversimplification, but it's basically the
3 guaranteed amount of profit that they are allowed
4 to charge you, their customers.

5 There are many more areas that our office is
6 planning on litigating to make sure that we are
7 finding the most amount of cost savings that we can
8 for all of you today.

9 Also bear in mind that TECO has the burden of
10 proof in these proceedings, and in every area where
11 we do not believe the company has met their burden
12 of proof, we plan on challenging them for you to
13 make sure we are finding all of the cost savings
14 that we can.

15 Remember that today is your hearing. It's not
16 the Commission's hearing. It's not TECO's hearing.
17 It's not my hearing. It is yours. This is your
18 chance to come here today and to tell all of us
19 your experiences that you have had with the
20 company, or what you feel about this rate increase
21 application that the company has put in. That's
22 the good, the bad and the ugly.

23 Please use your voice to participate. Again,
24 we really appreciate all of you taking time out of
25 your lives to be here. Thank you very much. And

1 if you have any other questions, I will be here
2 after the meeting, along with my boss, who is a
3 tough act to follow, the Public Counsel, Walt, to
4 answer your questions.

5 Thank you very much.

6 (Interpreter translating in Spanish.)

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Florida Rising and LULAC.

8 MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Bradley Marshall on behalf of Florida Rising and
10 LULAC.

11 Florida Rising and LULAC are associations of
12 residential customers, and are in this case because
13 last year TECO had the third highest residential
14 electricity bills in the nation, out of 149
15 utilities with more than 100,000 residential
16 customers.

17 There are two parts of a rate case, the size
18 of the pie, how much rates increase, and how the
19 pie is sliced, how much each customer class pays,
20 also known as cost of service.

21 The argument -- TECO want to give a very large
22 slice of that pie to residential customers. The
23 argument is that TECO's power plants should be
24 allocated based on capacity demands. That is,
25 their ability to meet the peaks, the hour of

1 highest energy usage each summer and winter, which
2 shifts costs on to residential customers.

3 The problem with that, as TECO admits, is that
4 solar power investments are the bulk of their
5 generating investments, that by 2027, which is
6 included in this rate case, solar power will
7 contribute just 1.5 percent of their total capacity
8 to move the summer peak --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Boo.

10 MR. MARSHALL: -- meaning the 75-megawatt
11 solar plant will contribute just over one megawatt
12 to summer peaks, and nothing, nothing at all, to
13 the winter peak as the sun isn't out yet.

14 Now, we are pro solar, but we also have to
15 acknowledge, as I think TECO does, that the true
16 value of solar comes from the energy it produces
17 throughout the day, reducing the need -- fossil --
18 reducing the need for burning fossil fuels not in a
19 small contribution during the highest hour of the
20 summer peak; therefore, we think they should
21 allocate those costs based on energy.

22 As you can imagine, big industrial customers
23 use a lot of energy, and since that's where the
24 value of solar comes from, that's how we should
25 distribute those costs. Since the big industrials

1 drive energy usage, they should also pay their fair
2 share of the costs for the generation of it.

3 (Applause from the audience.)

4 MR. MARSHALL: We also think that TECO's
5 request of 11.5 percent return on equity,
6 essentially guaranteed profits, is ridiculously
7 high.

8 TECO is owned by Emera, headquartered in Nova
9 Scotia. Nova Scotia Power, also owned by Emera,
10 operates just fine with a nine-percent return on
11 equity. If nine percent is good enough for their
12 home territory, it should be good enough for them
13 in Florida.

14 We also don't think that they should be
15 spending hundreds of millions of dollars of your
16 money on their brand new headquarters building
17 because they don't want to extend the lease on
18 their current headquarters. Nor --

19 (Applause from the audience.)

20 MR. MARSHALL: -- nor on building a fossil
21 fuel power plant to serve as backup power for the
22 Air Force Base. If the Air Force wants backup
23 power specifically for them, we think they should
24 pay for it, not --

25 (Applause from the audience.)

1 MR. MARSHALL: I am looking forward to your
2 testimony today. And thank you so much for being
3 here and for participating.

4 (Applause from the audience.)

5 (Interpreter translating in Spanish.)

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

7 Let's move on now to the customer testimony
8 section of our hearing this morning. I just kind
9 of have some housekeeping items.

10 This meeting is being transcribed. Of course
11 all the testimony that is being given will be put
12 on paper and, of course, read by a multitude of
13 parties. So I don't -- I don't mind clapping and,
14 you know, I understand that there is some, you
15 know, emotional decisions that are, you know, that
16 are being made today. No problem. Just try not to
17 overlap someone speaking, because sometimes their
18 words can be lost or maybe not heard, and it's
19 important that the person speaking gets their point
20 across. So try to refrain as best you can. Let
21 them finish speaking if you are going to clap or
22 comment. And, of course, let's try to keep it as
23 orderly as possible today.

24 With us today, of course, you have already met
25 our Public Counsel, Mr. Walt Trierweiler. With him

1 is Mr. Ponce. They will be helping me today as we
2 call up names of individuals. We are going to go
3 in groups of three. I am going to have them call
4 three at a time. If you hear your name called,
5 then be ready, right? If you are the first person,
6 just please approach the mic. Of course, if you
7 are on deck or behind them, just be ready to
8 approach the microphone.

9 I have got two groups of speakers, right? So
10 I have got folks that have signed up on-line. They
11 have sworn an oath on-line, and then I have got
12 folks that have signed up here in person, right?
13 These folks that have signed up in person have not
14 taken an oath yet.

15 So I am going to ask anybody who has signed up
16 today in person, so I am not sure how many this is,
17 but it's probably a good 15 or 20 folks, do you
18 mind standing so we can take a quick oath?

19 All right. Please raise your right hand.

20 Do you swear and affirm that you will present
21 the truth in this matter today and you are a
22 customer of TECO?

23 (Chorus of affirmative responses.)

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Excellent. All right.

25 Thank you. That's simple just to do it that way.

1 We can -- we can get that out of the way. Of
2 course, the new folks that come in, I will just
3 have to swear them in individually.

4 Let's go ahead and let's start with any
5 elected officials. I like to give the elected
6 officials the opportunity to address first. I know
7 I believe we have Commissioner Kemp in the
8 audience.

9 Ma'am, you are recognized when you are ready.

10 COMMISSIONER KEMP: Thank you.

11 Good morning. I am Hillsborough County
12 Commissioner Pat Kemp, Countywide. I am also the
13 Democratic nominee for U.S. House District 15 that
14 represents northeast Hillsborough County, as well
15 as parts of Pasco and Polk.

16 First of all, thank you, for the first time in
17 15 years, for moving this hearing to Hillsborough
18 County. It's very much appreciated. A hearing
19 nearly 300 miles away in Tallahassee doesn't really
20 provide residents with the opportunity to
21 participate actively and to be heard.

22 I made a motion last year at the Hillsborough
23 County Commission to formally request that the PSC
24 conduct hearings on electric rates here. The
25 motion received unanimous bipartisan support by the

1 Board of Hillsborough County Commissioners. So
2 thank you for granting that request.

3 My hope is that hearings about electric rates
4 in Hillsborough County, and most of TECO's
5 residents or its customers are in Hillsborough
6 County, will always be held in Hillsborough County
7 from now on, especially any hearing like this one,
8 where the PSC is being asked to consider an
9 increase in electricity rates for residential
10 customers.

11 In the time of -- in this time of price
12 increases for housing, transportation, food,
13 medicine and other needs, residents are struggling
14 to meet basic family needs, and we hear it all the
15 time at the County Commission, and we hear pleas
16 for help all the time, and our electric rates are a
17 huge part of that plea.

18 People are concerned that electric rates that
19 they pay to power their homes are unfair compared
20 to other communities throughout the country. Many
21 have cited the high return on equity that TECO is
22 seeking, and we increasingly see as evidence that
23 these increases are not necessary.

24 The need to diversify energy sources is also
25 another major area of concern, especially when we

1 have an abundant source, a natural resource, the
2 sun, that we are not using to any great extent.
3 And we importing, instead, billions of dollars in
4 fossil fuels from other states when we have our own
5 abundant natural resource here. We are
6 over-investing fracked gas and under-investing in
7 human energy.

8 I am also concerned that by keeping rates of
9 large institutional and corporate customers lower
10 compared to residential customers, that TECO is
11 discouraging these big customers from seeking out
12 alternative energy sources, such as solar power.

13 Please listen to all of the residents'
14 concerns today and find a way to make a fair
15 balance between the needs of all of our electric
16 customers and bring TECO's residential rates and
17 return on equity more in line with other
18 communities across the country. It's going to be a
19 long, hot summer, as we know. Record breaking
20 temperatures. Climate change. Please consider the
21 needs of families who are feeling this heat and the
22 pressure of the escalating cost of living. And
23 thank you so much for your time.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Commissioner,
25 for your testimony.

1 (Applause from the audience.)

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Members and parties, just
3 remember just to get my attention if you guys have
4 any questions, of course, for any of the speakers.

5 Let's -- Mr. Ponce, do you want to call the
6 names or --

7 MR. PONCE: Will do.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. It doesn't matter.
9 Whatever you guys prefer.

10 Let's start with the folks that have signed up
11 first. Let's go with the first group of three, and
12 then, customers, let's try to keep our comments to
13 five minutes. Try to make sure that all of your
14 neighbors have an opportunity to speak today, we
15 have a lot of folks on here. I won't interrupt you
16 of course, mid-thought or midstream, but just kind
17 of round up to that number.

18 Let's go ahead and start with the first group
19 of three.

20 MR. PONCE: So the first three customers are
21 Richard Pace, Senior, Lekevia Alexander and
22 Virginia Burns. These are the first three
23 customers offering their testimony today.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear in the
25 back. We can't hear you.

1 MR. TRIERWEILER: Can you speak a little
2 louder?

3 MR. PONCE: Again, just to make sure that
4 everybody heard the first three names. The first
5 three names offering testimony today are Richard
6 Pace, Senior, Lekevia Alexander and Virginia Burns.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Mr. Pace, it looks like you
8 are at the microphone. You are recognized when you
9 are ready.

10 MR. PACE: Thank you.

11 Members of the public, Commissioners, counsel,
12 good morning. Good to be here.

13 A long, long time ago in a place far away, I
14 was an attorney for Consumers Counsel Office, and I
15 argued these cases for years there. Like I said,
16 that was a long, long time ago. I am retired now,
17 living in Florida. I have one small thing to talk
18 to you about this morning.

19 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear you.

20 MR. PACE: I have one small thing to talk to
21 you about this morning, and it's five cents. A
22 nickel. I have solar panels installed on my home,
23 and our solar panels generate enough electricity to
24 power the entire house. I do buy power from the
25 utility company, because at night when there is no

1 sun, we use the grid, we get power from the utility
2 company. I don't have to because I have a battery,
3 but my wife and I have medical issues and we have
4 to have power, so therefore, we are using
5 electricity supplied by the company.

6 And the fact that we have solar, I think, is a
7 good thing for everybody. It is clean energy from
8 the sun. It's not burning any fossil fuels, and
9 it's just a good thing for the world and for
10 everybody, for all -- it's helpful for TECO because
11 it lessens the amount of generation capacity that
12 you have to have, and so I think as a matter of
13 public policy that that should be encouraged, and
14 that should be reflected in their tariffs. But the
15 way things work is I am losing a nickel. The
16 company is taking a nickel from me, which doesn't
17 seem like a lot of money these days, but it's my
18 nickel, and they are taking it, and I will tell you
19 how.

20 If I have to use the utility's company power,
21 they charge me seven cents per kilowatt hour. So I
22 have a meter that runs both ways. When I sell my
23 electricity back to the company, it's charging
24 them. When I am using it, it's charging me. At
25 the end of the year, it's supposed to be a true-up,

1 and it's supposed to balance out.

2 Well, when that happens in February, they
3 charge me seven cents, but when they take my
4 energy, they only pay me two cents. They are
5 taking five cents from me. This is energy I am
6 generating with the sun. They are not generating
7 it. They don't have any generation costs. They
8 don't have any fuel costs. They don't have any
9 costs for equipment or anything because I am paying
10 on my bill for the equipment and for the hookup.

11 So why are they charging me that extra nickel?
12 It's not fair. And not only do they charge me the
13 extra nickel, but when I sell them the energy at
14 two cents, they turn around and sell it to all my
15 neighbors and everybody else at the seven cents
16 cost, as though they had to generate that with coal
17 and oil when they didn't. And so they are
18 double-dipping. And I think that the tariffs
19 should reflect the fact that we want to encourage
20 people to go off the grid to the extent possible to
21 lessen the burden so that you don't have to go out
22 and build more power plants, you don't have to have
23 more generation, and you don't have to burn more
24 coal and oil.

25 I would really like my nickels back. Thank

1 you.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 (Applause from the audience.)

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Lekevia Alexander. Lekevia
6 Alexander.

7 Not seeing Ms. Alexander, let's move to
8 Virginia Burns. Virginia Burns.

9 Not seeing Virginia Burns, let's move to the
10 next three.

11 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
12 sworn testimony today are Nina Tatlock, Karen
13 Michalski and Patricia Kemp.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Patricia Kemp was
15 Commissioner Kemp. Let's also include John Myrick.
16 Nina Tatlock, you are recognized when you are
17 ready.

18 MS. TATLOCK: Thank you. My name is Nina
19 Tatlock.

20 I do know to the purpose of a corporation is
21 to make money. The purpose of our government
22 should be to protect the people. The preamble of
23 our U.S. Constitution speaks to the common events
24 and general welfare of we, the people.

25 We made our elected officials as part of our

1 government to protect us, to protect us from the
2 greed of corporations and protect us from the many
3 harms of using fossil fuels. Even Emera, the
4 parent company of TECO, talks of decarbonizing.

5 The Florida Public Service Commission is
6 appointed by our elected officials. Public service
7 is part of its name, as has been stated earlier
8 here.

9 We the people and customers of TECO need you
10 to say no to this rate hike request from Tampa
11 Electric Company to protect the customers. Not a
12 penny more for dirty carbon energy. TECO needs to
13 make better choices to decarbonize. Customers
14 should not be asked for pay for the many years of
15 corporate decisions.

16 I live in Apollo Beach in the shadow of the
17 Big Bend Power Plant, and I am worried about the
18 health and welfare of my community.

19 Thank you for the chance to speak.

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 (Applause from the audience.)

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next up is Karen Michalski.

24 MS. MICHALSKI: Good morning, Commissioners,
25 and thank you for coming again to Tampa, as

1 Commissioner Pat Kemp requested with a bipartisan
2 commission. And also the importance of coming
3 here.

4 So I signed up for Monday night remote
5 session. And you get the confirmation, and I have
6 the email, and then it says, you will receive a
7 second email with the link. I didn't get that
8 link. So again, you know, having to come in
9 person, this is great.

10 My fellow resident also signed up on Tuesday
11 evening. He is not on the main list because the
12 staff printed on Tuesday day and then came here. I
13 am surprised that Hillsborough does not have a
14 printer for you guys to access and print the latest
15 list so that everyone can participate, because
16 participation is key, because this affects our
17 personal lives. This affects budgets. This
18 affects food. Food and security is -- maybe it
19 doesn't affect your family, but it affects many
20 families of Hillsborough County and the state of
21 Florida. So now let's go on to this rate increase.

22 So 2020 -- it's unreasonable and an unjust
23 rate increase requesting the 11.5 percent profit,
24 as, you know, previously stated and across the
25 U.S., this is just unreasonable and unjust.

1 Now, let's go to how they are going to -- they
2 are planning for this. 2025 is their test case
3 year. So is there any requirements and
4 limitations, restrictions of what they can spend?
5 How about salary increases? How about all extra
6 spending? Fleet changes? All of these spendings
7 which is going to then be evaluated to see if it's
8 just, and likely it's not going to be just.

9 And I realize that you have the unfortunate
10 position to make this decision, but you can ask for
11 more time, you can ask for a delay, you can ask and
12 give maybe third-party assistance to the Office of
13 Public Counsel so that they can do a thorough
14 investigation, because this is going to be not just
15 now. It's going to be 2026, 2027, 2028. This is
16 going to be life-changing for many people. Unjust.
17 And is TECO going to set up a tent, a tent housing
18 for all those people who are going to lose their
19 homes?

20 And think about that. Think about if you
21 can't pay your electric bill. Think about if you
22 can't pay your food bill, if you can't pay your
23 medical bill. This is really a much larger impact.

24 Now, as previously stated, why can't we go
25 solar? Solar is here all the time, and -- but if

1 we think about it, you -- there is not much
2 maintenance on solar, and there is not much
3 continuous cost for solar. So as a company, you
4 can't constantly be asking the ratepayers for an
5 increase. So it is much more efficient and
6 economical for the ratepayer.

7 I realize you have pressure from the Governor
8 to always say yes, and you can, but you can say yes
9 to a lower amount, and you can say yes later.
10 Still saying yes, you are still making them happy.
11 You are still making TECO happy, but it's later and
12 it's less.

13 Thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 (Applause from the audience.)

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: John Myrick. John Myrick.
18 Thank you, sir. You are recognized whenever you
19 are ready.

20 MR. MYRICK: Thank you. Good morning.

21 I am John Myrick. I am a TECO customer, and I
22 am an AARP volunteer, as you can tell by the
23 insignia there.

24 First of all, let me say I know that your task
25 is not an easy one. You need to exercise

1 Solomon-like integrity in making the decision
2 that's going to ensure that the utility is going to
3 get a fair and equitable return on their investment
4 without that return being excessive, or let me even
5 use the word obscene sometimes. Although you have
6 no obligation -- or although you have an
7 obligation -- also you have an obligation for the
8 customer that the power rates be reasonable as
9 possible in this inflation and fuel economy.

10 We applaud you for taking on this challenge
11 and making this decision. We ask that you keep in
12 mind the customer that uses the electricity.

13 Many years ago when I retired, I had dreamed
14 of taking my johnboat, my fishing tackle and
15 spending a lot of time on the lakes of Polk County.
16 Needless to say that didn't happen. I am 82, and I
17 am still working. I do income tax, and that's --
18 one of the things that I do on a pro bono basis is
19 work with customers that are having to make daily
20 decisions about whether to have electricity to cook
21 and have a life or whether to be able to have food.
22 We ask that you keep these people in mind with
23 their limited funds.

24 There is no reason in this world that, in
25 America, that people should have to make those

1 decisions. We know that you can't stop all the
2 problems of the world, but you can make a dent in
3 them. And we are asking that you take the wisdom
4 of Solomon in making your decision and keeping the
5 minah, those cash-strapped people that are your
6 customers, that are our Floridians, in your
7 headlights as you make your decisions.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause from the audience.)

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
13 testimony today are Eleanor Jones, Zayne Smith and
14 John Bone.

15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Jones, you are
16 recognized when you are ready.

17 MS. JONES: Thank you.

18 Good morning. My name is Eleanor Jones, and I
19 live in Hillsborough County, and I have been a TECO
20 customer --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Louder.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Get closer to the
23 microphone.

24 MS. JONES: Oh, I am sorry.

25 My name is Eleanor Jones --

1 MR. TRIERWEILER: Get closer to your mouth.

2 MS. JONES: Oh, okay. Okay. Sorry.

3 My name is Eleanor Jones. I live in
4 Hillsborough County, and I have been a TECO
5 customer for over 40 years, and I am an AARP
6 member. I am here today to express my serious
7 concerns regarding the proposed rate increase by
8 TECO.

9 Many seniors, like myself, currently deal with
10 the rising cost of medicine, food and housing. I
11 have a neighbor right now that cannot afford to run
12 her AC due to illness and the huge monthly cost for
13 her medicine. TECO's request is based on corporate
14 greed, especially when a return on equity of 11.5
15 percent. I wish I could get that type of return on
16 my investments. That's pure profit for TECO. I
17 often try to conserve to help with lowering my
18 bill. With this increase to the base rate and the
19 fixed customer charge, I lose some of that control,
20 just like my neighbor.

21 TECO continues to point out that they lowered
22 our bills in June and January. This reduction of
23 our bills was due to the reduction in natural gas
24 prices. By law, TECO was required to refund
25 customers for that cost. We overpaid it.

1 I do urge the Commission to thoroughly
2 scrutinize the request by TECO, and consider the
3 impact that it would have on seniors like me and
4 other consumers, and ensure that rate increase is
5 fair and reasonable. Show us that you care about
6 us, by allowing -- by not allowing TECO more
7 profits.

8 Thank you for your time.

9 (Applause from the audience.)

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 Next up is Zayne Smith. Zayne Smith. Is
13 Zayne Smith in the room?

14 Not seeing them. John Bone. Is John Bone in
15 the room. I can cross that in my notes. Not
16 seeing Jon.

17 Let's move to the next three.

18 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
19 sworn testimony today are Lee Daly, Nancy Stevens
20 and Isabella Moeller.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Lee Daly. Is Lee Daly
22 here? Cross that as well.

23 I believe that's Nancy Stevens coming to the
24 microphone.

25 MR. TRIERWEILER: And, Nancy, if you would go

1 ahead and try to Elvis the mic, you know.

2 MS. STEVENS: Elvis the mic.

3 Hello. My name is Nancy Stevens. I am a
4 resident of Tampa, and I am also a volunteer with
5 Tampa Bay Sierra Club, an environmental group. And
6 not surprisingly, I have solar panels on my roof
7 for the environment -- not only for the
8 environmental benefits, but for the financial
9 benefits. They have paid back themselves. I've
10 had them seven years. Many months I am just paying
11 the base rate -- the base service rate.

12 The 10-dollar increase that's proposed would
13 unfairly increase my rates almost 50 percent in
14 those months that I am not using any of TECO's
15 electricity. In fact, that money is going to
16 building a new headquarters, and building a gas
17 plant for big business -- a big customer. Instead,
18 TECO should be investing in solar infrastructure
19 for the people of Hillsborough County and helping
20 everyone else lower their rates so they can use
21 solar as well that TECO is providing, and not have
22 to pay the additional fuel charges that TECO has
23 been charging us for years, which I have not had to
24 pay. Thank goodness.

25 I do want to thank you all for your service

1 and listening to all of us today, and helping set
2 these rates. Your website says that the Public
3 Service Commission has the responsibility to set
4 rates that are fair, just and reasonable. Well,
5 this increase is not fair, just nor reasonable.
6 The 11-and-a-half percent is gauging Florida
7 customers to the benefits of shareholders and
8 executives of Emera, who live throughout the United
9 States, Canada, throughout the world, and
10 benefiting from these excess profits from -- the
11 Florida citizens are paying.

12 Instead the nine-percent that their local --
13 Emera's local utility pays is probably a more
14 reasonable return on equity, and that should be --
15 should be what Tampa residents -- Hillsborough
16 County residents pay, supporting these and
17 supporting everyone else. So thank you for your
18 service, and please deny this rate increase.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Ms. Stevens.

21 (Applause from the audience.)

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: On my -- my paperwork here
23 shows that you were not sworn in on-line. Were you
24 sworn in earlier?

25 MS. STEVENS: I thought I was sworn in

1 on-line.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Do you affirm the
3 testimony you provided today was truth?

4 MS. STEVENS: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

6 All right. Next up, I believe, is Isabella
7 Moeller. Ms. Moeller, you are recognized when you
8 are ready.

9 MS. MOELLER: Hello. My name is Isabella
10 Moeller, and I am a TECO customer and USF student,
11 and I am an intern at Food & Water Watch, which has
12 5,400 members who are TECO customers.

13 As a college student living on campus, I
14 understand firsthand the financial challenges that
15 escalating utility bills impose on individuals and
16 families. Moving away from my home state of
17 Wisconsin and financing my education independently,
18 rising energy bills significantly impact my ability
19 to afford basic necessities and pursue my academic
20 goals. My main priority should be doing well in
21 school and planning for my future career, not
22 worrying about how I am going to afford my
23 increasing tuition and rent next year, which are
24 partly due to rising energy costs. This
25 underscores the need for more affordable and

1 sustainable energy solutions to support students
2 like me in achieving our educational and career
3 aspirations.

4 TECO has been increasing rates at twice the
5 real inflation, and is now seeking another hike to
6 boost return on equity for their shareholders.
7 Even more so, last month at the shareholder
8 meeting, TECO's parent company Emera bragged that
9 TECO's customers contributed 64 percent of their
10 revenue, even though TECO's customers only make up
11 35 percent of their customer bases.

12 These rate increases are clearly unnecessary
13 and are disproportionately put onto TECO's
14 customers. The corporate greed reflected in these
15 rate hikes is astounding, prioritizing profit over
16 the well-being of hard-working individuals and
17 families.

18 Residents are clearly unhappy with these rate
19 hikes, as evidenced by the turnout here today.
20 Therefore, I urge you to consider the needs of
21 TECO's customers and reject TECO's rate increase
22 request. It is imperative that we prioritize the
23 financial well-being of our communities, and
24 prevent large corporations like TECO from
25 unnecessarily offloading costs onto ratepayers. By

1 doing so, you can ensure a more equitable and
2 sustainable future for us all.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 (Applause from the audience.)

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next three.

8 MR. PONCE: Next three customers offering
9 sworn testimony today are Jennifer Logan-Porter,
10 Lorenzo Edwards and Michael Sutherland.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Logan-Porter.
12 Ms. Logan-Porter.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can barely hear you.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Logan-Porter. Jennifer
15 Logan-Porter.

16 Not seeing her, next up is Lorenzo Edwards.
17 Lorenzo Edwards.

18 Not seeing Lorenzo Edwards, Michael
19 Sutherland. Michael Sutherland.

20 Not seeing Mr. Sutherland, let's move on to
21 the next three, please.

22 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
23 their sworn testimony are Brian Turnbull, David
24 Sinclair and Ashton Maddox.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Mr. Turnbull. Is Mr.

1 Turnbull here?

2 Not seeing him, David Sinclair. Is David
3 Sinclair here? Mr. Sinclair, you are recognized
4 when you are ready.

5 MR. SINCLAIR: Good afternoon -- good morning.
6 I will get there. My name is David Sinclair. I am
7 a member of the League of United Latin American
8 Citizens, LULAC.

9 I have been a customer of Tampa Electric here
10 in Tampa for almost 40 years, and I definitely did
11 not know for that period of time anything about the
12 Public Service Commission. One of my fellow
13 neighborhood friends heard that TECO was asking for
14 a service hike. They said, well, you know, who are
15 we going to talk to? And I said, well, there is
16 this Public Service Commission, and they have
17 power. And my friend said, oh, really? You mean
18 somebody cares about us? I said, well, you know,
19 you can express yourself to these guys. And my
20 friend said, well, what a surprise. People really
21 care about us.

22 And then I said, well, surprise to you,
23 because this is a powerful group of the -- of
24 public officials who have been appointed to this
25 commission, and these folks are this august group

1 before me today. They have the power to hand over
2 to Tampa Electric the right to increase the
3 electric energy burden on low- and middle-income
4 folk.

5 Now, that is a surprise, because that is a
6 heavy burden on you to have the power to impose the
7 right of the corporation to raise electric power
8 bills on lower and middle-income people.

9 I am here today to ask you in the name of the
10 League of United Latin American Citizens in Florida
11 to deny Tampa Electric the right to have this
12 increase in electric rate, because it's an increase
13 in the energy burden of low- and middle-income
14 folks.

15 I am a senior, and we know that seniors want a
16 fair and just and reasonable price to pay for the
17 electricity, and the rate increase that Tampa
18 Electric is asking is not fair, just and
19 reasonable.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 (Applause from the audience.)

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 Next up is Ashton Maddox. Ashton Maddox.

25 Not seeing Mr. Maddox, let's move to the next

1 group of three.

2 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
3 their sworn testimony are Krystal Pate, Brittany
4 Panton and Manuel Rios.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Krystal Pate. Is Krystal
6 Pate in the room?

7 MS. PATE: Good morning.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Good morning. You are
9 recognized when you are ready.

10 MS. PATE: Good morning, everyone. I am
11 Krystal Pate Harris. I am here on behalf of myself
12 and my community, and the folks that cannot make it
13 to this meeting and do not have the credibility as
14 me to come here to speak on behalf of the high
15 electric bill, so I actually wrote my speech out.
16 Give me just a second.

17 Hello. My name is Krystal Pate. I am a
18 leader with the -- with Central Florida Jobs with
19 Justice. I am here on the behalf of my community
20 to discuss the outrageous TECO -- TECO electric
21 bill.

22 I am a mother of six on a fixed income. Each
23 month, I have to decide if I -- if I am going to
24 pay my rent and food or pay my TECO bill. The
25 amount of money TECO is charging us as a consumer

1 is more than my car payment, my car insurance, my
2 medical needing, my food and other necessary for my
3 family, and this is outrageous to me, as a mother
4 of six. And I just think that this is unfair.

5 I think that enough is enough. TECO needs to
6 stop with the lies and get it together. And do not
7 increase this electric bill as thousand of people
8 will be affected, not just me, but other families
9 will be out on the streets, or forced to move in
10 with their parents or grandparents if they are
11 still living. I can't even imagine.

12 This year, I couldn't even afford a birthday
13 party for my three children that has their
14 birthdays in March. I have to now depend on family
15 and ask for extra money, because my TECO bill is
16 extremely too high.

17 I have went from paying 140 to, now my TECO
18 bill is \$564. I am currently in a three-bedroom,
19 two-bath. As this does not affect me getting my
20 hair, my nails -- this does not affect me getting
21 my hair, my nails, any personal things for me that
22 stop me from paying my TECO bill as this is simply
23 TECO has went up on the rate, did not notify
24 customers, told us at the last month when we called
25 in, which was December.

1 I want to assure you that, as a mother of six,
2 sometimes I have to pinch from my rent money, from
3 my car payment, from my daycare, from my medical
4 expenses to provide for my family to make sure I
5 pay my TECO bill, because it is a must that we have
6 the lights, just like it is a must that we have the
7 roof over our head, as I can't go and stay with
8 anyone with six children, can't go to go stay with
9 anyone with six children plus my dog. I just think
10 it's outrageous that you guys cannot put y'all self
11 in our shoes and imagine what we are going through.

12 As I stated before, enough is enough with the
13 lies, TECO. We don't want to it hear anymore. We
14 want to see actions, and we want you guys to not
15 increase this electric bill.

16 And as I stated before, I am here on the
17 behalf of myself, my community and those that
18 cannot attend this meeting for the outrageous --
19 outrageous electric bill. You guys are sitting up
20 here as if you guys are not affected, but we are.
21 And we don't want to hear what you can and can't
22 do, because you guys have the power. And at this
23 point, we want some actions. Me, speaking on
24 behalf of my community, I want some actions. I
25 don't want to see people just sitting up here

1 looking at me, mean faces, or whatever. It is
2 enough.

3 You guys are not walking in our shoes. You
4 guys are raising the electric bill, and then not
5 notifying us. Then you have the manager from TECO
6 calling me at the last minute yesterday to ask me
7 is there anything she can help me with when I have
8 been calling numerous of times and no managers
9 couldn't help me. But now that I had spoke on
10 Monday, everybody and they mama seem to be calling
11 me, and I don't understand why. Because I been
12 calling way before the meetings and didn't get no
13 help.

14 And I am not here to speak to the TECO person
15 that's present here. I don't have any questions.
16 My question is, don't -- (INAUDIBLE) -- me. When I
17 needed you, you wasn't there. So don't speak to me
18 before the meeting.

19 I would like for you guys to not increase this
20 electric bill because there is thousand of people
21 that's affected, not just me. And I am a mother of
22 six, and I know there is people that can't make it
23 to this meeting to speak.

24 We are forced to not have food. I don't think
25 you guys can imagine how that feels because you

1 guys looking pretty descent up here. And it's so
2 much that we look good, but we are not okay because
3 we are trying to figure out if we are going to pay
4 the rent, are we going to pay the TECO, are we
5 going to pay the water bill, or are we going to pay
6 the cable bill, are we going to pay our car
7 insurance, our medical expenses, food for our
8 children, clothes and other necessary.

9 Please do not raise this bill, as I am already
10 struggling. And I have not got anywhere -- as I
11 stated before, I don't need TECO contacting me now.
12 When I needed them last month, the month before,
13 nobody couldn't answer any questions for me. So
14 you calling me yesterday, blowing me up four times,
15 I don't want to talk. I want to see some actions,
16 and know that there is a lot of people that's
17 suffering that did not attend this meeting because
18 they are not capable, or may not have
19 transportation, especially for our people in
20 low-income housing. I am pretty sure they are
21 suffering, just like I am.

22 I just ask that you put yourself in our shoes.
23 Imagine not being able to provide birthday parties
24 for your children because you got to make sure to
25 pay TECO and the rent to keep a roof over your

1 children head.

2 Thank you. As I stated before, I am Krystal
3 Pate Harris, I am here on the behalf of myself and
4 my community, asking that you guys do not increase
5 this electric bill rate.

6 Thank you. Everyone have a beautiful day.

7 (Applause from the audience.)

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Brittany Panton.

11 MS. PANTON: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ma'am, you are recognized
13 when you are ready.

14 MS. PANTON: Thank you, Commissioners, for
15 coming down here and meeting us in person. I am
16 aware that this is the first time in 15 years that
17 y'all have did an in-person meeting. I would like
18 to thank you.

19 My name is Brittany Panton. I am a Tampa
20 organizer for Central Florida Jobs with Justice,
21 and what I do is I go in my community and I educate
22 them about the energy burden that has taken place.
23 A lot of people in the low-income environments and
24 people of color communities do not even know why
25 they bills are going up.

1 I have red bills with individuals. I have
2 cried with individuals. I have tried to help
3 people apply for energy efficiency programs that,
4 when it comes to their time to have that, they --
5 they let the individuals know that they do not have
6 any money. It's sad.

7 It's parents out here that have to tell their
8 kids, no, they can't play sports, or these are
9 people out here that maybe cannot pay for that
10 medicine because we are in a burden with our rent,
11 our electricity, with our food, with gas.
12 Everything is going up, I understand, but TECO
13 already got two rate hikes out of us in the
14 beginning of last year, and now they want it again?

15 I understand you have to apply, and they go
16 through the process that they have to go through,
17 but do they think raising a rate makes sense when
18 we are already paying almost \$300 to \$500 already?
19 We already have a homelessness problem here in
20 Hillsborough County, so that's just going to add on
21 to it.

22 I just think -- I am part of the problem too
23 -- not a problem, but, like, I am struggling to pay
24 my light bill as well. As a single mom just
25 recently got divorced, it is hard to tell my son

1 that he can't play baseball this year because mommy
2 can't afford the cleat, glove or a bat. I just
3 felt like if TECO put theirselves in our shoes and
4 just lived the life of one of us that's struggling,
5 they may see things from a different side.

6 It just doesn't make sense that the person
7 that own TECO is not even in the United States.
8 They are in Canada. So raising our rate and seeing
9 that this big increase is hurting the people of
10 Hillsborough County really doesn't do no justice in
11 Canada, because they are not here.

12 I just hope that you five Commissioners take
13 into consideration of us taking the time off of
14 work to express how we really feel and what's
15 really going on in our life to not raise the rate
16 hike. Please oppose it.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 (Applause from the audience.)

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Manuel Rios, you are
22 recognized when you are ready.

23 MR. RIOS: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and I
24 want to thank you and everyone here giving us this
25 opportunity to speak on this rate increase.

1 I am Manuel Rios, and I am a 20-year veteran
2 U.S. military. I am also a member of the
3 homeowners' association in Queens Cove in Winter
4 Haven, and I am here to voice the -- their
5 concerns.

6 First of all, like the first speaker that
7 spoke this morning, I am also a solar energy
8 consumer, and I installed solar panels on my house
9 so I could cut down on the costs from the increase
10 that I have had over the years from TECO. With
11 that, I received a bill from TECO, and it was \$58.
12 Now, I have only used \$28 of energy, and the rest
13 of it was on this latest charges and taxes.

14 I noticed that -- excuse me. I had too much
15 coffee this morning, and I get the shakes when I
16 have too much coffee.

17 I had drove by Route 60, and I noticed that
18 they have a solar farm there and a lot of solar
19 panels. I am not sure if it belongs to TECO or
20 another energy company, but if they can harness
21 that energy and pass it on to the customers, we
22 wouldn't be paying as much.

23 And like the first gentleman said, I am giving
24 them energy and they are giving me pennies of what
25 I consume, or what I have consumed and have paid to

1 put those solar panels on my roof.

2 Now, my other concern is for my community. We
3 have a lot of seniors there, and they have to pay
4 medical costs, not only that, but medications that
5 they have, and they need to keep some of their
6 medications refrigerated, which are expensive
7 medications, and they have to think about where
8 they are going to spend their money, on this new
9 rate hike or worrying about purchasing their
10 medication and also keeping it refrigerated?

11 When the power goes down, when we get
12 lightning, or anything like that, the power goes
13 out in the grid, and it goes out sometimes for two
14 days that, you know, that's really, just the
15 lightning? That is unbelievable.

16 And I don't want to take up too much of your
17 time, but I concur with everyone else that has come
18 up here about not increasing, or not allowing them
19 to increase the rates for us.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause from the audience.)

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 Next three.

25 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering

1 their sworn testimony today are David Coleman, Todd
2 Randolph and Angela Dunson.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Mr. Coleman. You are
4 recognized, sir, when you are ready.

5 MR. COLEMAN: My name is Dave Coleman. Good
6 morning.

7 Two functional hearings so far with many
8 talking points brought up, you know, abuses of TECO
9 before and after Emera, how the State EPA has so
10 many times called TECO out in the courts and
11 resolved the issues within days with little
12 consequence. When they were fined, TECO
13 systematically comes before this commission --

14 MR. TRIERWEILER: Try stepping back just a
15 little bit.

16 MR. COLEMAN: -- systematically comes before
17 this commission and receives rate hikes to pay for
18 them. One fine, as I understand it, was \$1,000 a
19 day for 18 years. Not a dime of that was ever
20 paid. Emera bought a company that should be a
21 super -- Superfund cleanup site.

22 The thesis I brought to your attention, on
23 pages 64 through 79, brings up all the lawsuits by
24 the EPA, and how they are settled with extremely
25 low fines. The local county EPC seems now

1 responsible to protect our people, and they do
2 nothing. They took our commissioners on a boat
3 ride this year, no value whatsoever.

4 One concern would be page 79, where it talks
5 of nine billion pounds of coal ash stored on-site
6 in unlined coal ash pits 10 years ago. There were
7 toxins found in aquifer. In 2001, their consent
8 order -- I had mentioned there have been four --
9 that sentence was with the other thing.

10 Anyway, there have been four toxic bus tours
11 that residents have attended over the past years as
12 we watched TECO transfer to fracked gas, fracked
13 gas supplied by Peoples Gas, a company that they
14 owned. The bus tours were folks that live in
15 Progress Village and the visits to the impacted
16 frontline community made clear that disaster
17 maintenance resilience is a must.

18 Given the proximity of stockpiled toxins and
19 their underground shifting toxic plume that --
20 (INAUDIBLE) -- to go and pays no consequences for.
21 Progress Village has piles hovering over their
22 heads. A direct hit from an Ian would be
23 catastrophic.

24 Page 11, Item E talks of gypsum byproducts
25 storage unit. I have been told that that -- have

1 you ever heard they grind gypsum -- I have been
2 told it doesn't have a flow pipe from the adjacent
3 deadly mosaic gypstacks right onto the TECO piles.
4 I have to assume running into the bay after that.

5 When attending an on-line recent Emera
6 shareholders meeting, I pray some of those
7 profiteers are listening today, Emera. Is the
8 largest air polluter in Hillsborough, even above
9 traffic. Traffic is egregious in itself. Just
10 last night, the TIP, the T-I-P, brought to the TPO
11 recommended -- recommendations not to increase
12 lanes on 275, the LT 275, but to increase public
13 transit, and the -- (INAUDIBLE) -- voted the
14 opposite. Those rural citizens are suffering from
15 the air that they breath.

16 Send a message to Emera, enough is enough with
17 industry of environmental racism, environmental
18 crime and corporate environmental violence just to
19 increase their profits. They want you to approve
20 yet another rate increase.

21 There was a recent survey in Hillsborough
22 County, the vast majority of the respondents were
23 white, earning 75 to 400 K a year. That is not
24 representative of the 1.5 million people that live
25 here. The one thing that you will hear today have

1 no recourse except for you.

2 TECO has the Hillsborough County the EOCC in
3 their pocket. County commissioners refuse to
4 listen to us. They come and they mock us. They
5 call us activists. Not the will of the people.
6 Another called us food and beverage at a town hall.

7 Well, the 4,000 people who took that survey
8 aren't the will of the people. You seem to be our
9 only recourse. I doubt this proceeding is anything
10 more than checking the box so shareholders will
11 have a -- (INAUDIBLE).

12 Low paying jobs, a housing crisis, we have
13 4,000 kids in our schools here in Hillsborough
14 County that that have no permanent address. Energy
15 burden is just one more flame on the fire. Tell
16 TECO to provide renewable, less costly, cleaner
17 energy. Demand they be responsible for the errors
18 of the sick company that they bought. Refuse to
19 give them rate hikes. You might even suggest they
20 work with us to become a public/private company,
21 and then eventually an all public like Lakeland
22 has.

23 This morning, Channel 2 reported that they
24 want increase the pay for increased energy solar.
25 They have no plan for 70 percent wind and solar by

1 2030 like other companies across the country. They
2 are invested in their own Peoples Gas division.
3 Walk away, Emera.

4 I use -- I use my United Health Care healthy
5 food utility allotment to pay my TECO bill. I take
6 from my \$60 a week food money to pay my electric,
7 and I am not alone.

8 (Applause from the audience.)

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Todd Randolph, you are recognized, sir.

12 MR. RANDOLPH: All right. Good morning. I am
13 Todd Randolph. I am a Tampa resident and involved
14 with several local environmental groups, including
15 Tampa Bay Sierra Club. Thank you for holding these
16 in-district here to hear from us.

17 I am here today because it's an easy sell to
18 get the morning off when you say you are wanting to
19 make a statement against the electricity rate
20 hikes, because it's an issue that impacts everyone
21 in this area. Particularly, it impacts the most
22 vulnerable in my community.

23 A base rate hike burdens low-income residents
24 disproportionately. Already some of my neighbors
25 that are lifelong residents of Tampa are feeling

1 squeezed out of their own hometown.

2 I value equality, sustainably and --
3 sustainability and quality of life. Rate hikes
4 negatively impact all of these values.
5 Implemented, the proposed hike will effectively
6 cause the average low-income resident's electricity
7 bill to have doubled from what it was six years
8 ago.

9 I am imploring the PSC to reject these
10 proposed hikes. The time is now to push back
11 against Emera/TECO greed and protect Florida
12 citizens.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 (Applause from the audience.)

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Angela Dunson. Angela
18 Dunson next on the list. Is Ms. Dunson in the
19 room?

20 Not seeing, let's have the next three.

21 MR. PONCE: So we actually have two of our
22 customers who have asked for an accommodation to go
23 earlier, if it pleases the Commission, and these
24 are Barbara Washington and Arlene Washington. I
25 don't know if you are willing to grant that. The

1 third person would be Tequila Hunter.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Was there a reason
3 given?

4 MR. PONCE: I understand they have --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Medical appointment.

6 MR. PONCE: -- medical appointment.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Yes, let's go in
8 that order, then, the ones you just announced.

9 MR. PONCE: So again, this is Barbara
10 Washington, Arlene Washington and Tequila Hunter.

11 MS. BARBARA WASHINGTON: Hello, Commission and
12 everybody in this room. My name is Barbara
13 Washington. I am from Hillsborough County, a
14 member of Florida Rising. I live off of --
15 (INAUDIBLE) -- River Hills.

16 My light bill went from \$62 to \$63, now it's
17 \$103. And I have to buy food. I have to run my
18 refrigerator to keep the food fresh. I have to
19 cook on the stove because it's electric. I have to
20 take a hot shower. Everything is electric in my
21 house, and I am on a fixed income, and it's like
22 not -- it's not like my income is going up any
23 more, so I just ask that you stop it, please, in
24 the light bills.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 (Applause from the audience.)

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: We have more members
5 identified.

6 MS. ARLENE WASHINGTON: Arlene Washington.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

8 MS. ARLENE WASHINGTON: I am an almost
9 80-year-old senior who lives in the building that
10 we have to work in order to pay our bills. We have
11 to give up something to pay our bills. And my
12 electric bill used to be 40 bucks, and I don't use
13 my air condition. I sweat at night. I use two
14 fans, the overhead fans that I use. I don't eat a
15 whole lot because I can't afford it, and I am on a
16 fixed income. And I saved a lot of money to move
17 down here to Florida. I have been here close to 40
18 years. And now I am going to move because I can't
19 afford to live here anymore. And I have to save
20 and borrow money so I can move to another place.

21 And it's a shame that you do this to us. And
22 most of the people in my building are my age or a
23 smidge younger, and they are getting jobs because
24 they can't afford to pay their bills. Between the
25 rent, it goes you every six months, and the TECO

1 bill that seems to be going up every month. I
2 mean, I went from \$40 to almost \$60 now, and that
3 makes me have to give up things. And right now, I
4 had to pay gas, you know, like for my car, so I can
5 get to my doctors appointments. Like, right now, I
6 am getting ready to go to PT so I can figure out
7 how to walk again.

8 And it's a shame that these things are
9 happening to us. And I am not saying it's your
10 fault, but we would appreciate it if you could help
11 us to maintain, to be able to live the way we want
12 to live, like everybody else. We want a life too.
13 Maybe even go out to a restaurant every now and
14 then, or a movie, but right now we can't do any of
15 those things because we can't afford to do these
16 things. And we can't afford to keep borrowing
17 money from family because they need to pay their
18 bills. And this is a shame. We would appreciate
19 if you could help us.

20 I mean, I sleep at night not very well because
21 it's hot. If I open my windows, the heat comes in,
22 and I can't do this. I am not sleeping well at
23 all. I sleep very little. It's too hot. And if I
24 get to sleep, then I have to get up to go to the
25 bathroom, and then I am starting this all over

1 again.

2 You know, between the medicine and trying to
3 eat -- although, I need to probably lose some
4 weight, but that's neither here nor there. You
5 know, that's here nor there. But I just need to be
6 able to eat so that I don't get sick. I have a
7 pacemaker, you know, not eating and stuff, my blood
8 pressure is up doesn't help me.

9 Thank you for your time. Think hard now.
10 Think hard about this, okay?

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 (Applause from the audience.)

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Tequila Hunter. Tequila
15 Hunter.

16 Not seeing, that let's move to the next three.

17 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
18 sworn testimony today are Danielle Sirmons, Tyca
19 Evans and Brooke Ward.

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Danielle Sirmons. Danielle
21 Sirmons.

22 Let's go to Tyca Evans. Tyca Evans.

23 Not seeing Tyca Evans in the room either.

24 Let's move to Brooke Ward. Brooke Ward.

25 MS. WARD: Yesterday I provided testimony, and

1 you told me that I wasn't allowed to give testimony
2 today, is that right? Okay, I was just making
3 sure. Okay. Well, thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Let me just verify you are
5 a customer of -- so yesterday was a Duke rate case,
6 and today is a --

7 MS. WARD: Okay. I just wanted to make sure.

8 Well, thank you so much for being here. We
9 are really excited to have the Public Service
10 Commission here to hear from all of the concerns of
11 the community.

12 We are here today to say, please oppose Tampa
13 Electric's profit-driven rate hikes. As you heard
14 from many folks today, Tampa Electric's customers
15 pay the third highest residential bills in the
16 country. Tampa Electric has increased utility
17 rates at twice the rate of inflation. Tampa
18 Electric's parent company, Emera, recently bragged
19 that they were making 64 percent of their revenue
20 from Tampa Electric customers, but only 35 percent
21 of their customer base are Tampa Electric
22 customers, so do the math there.

23 So this is obviously not a necessary increase
24 for Tampa Electric to continue doing business and
25 providing reliable service. This is an issue of

1 corporate greed, not of corporate need. And this
2 is an opportunity, as the Public Service
3 Commission, to say no to Tampa Electric's rate
4 hikes. Hear the problems that the community is
5 having. Hear our voices, that this is unnecessary,
6 unconscionable increase in rates. 11.5 percent is
7 two percent more than what their parent company
8 gets in Canada, and it is well above the national
9 average of 9.71 percent.

10 One out of every five Hillsborough families is
11 experiencing energy poverty. That means that their
12 electricity bills cost so much money that they have
13 to make the decision whether to pay that bill or to
14 pay for other necessities like food, medicine,
15 their kids. And that's just wrong. And, in fact,
16 out of that one out of five, half of those are
17 double the rate of energy poverty, paying over 12
18 percent of their income just on their electricity
19 bill. Something needs to happen, and you have the
20 ability to make that something happen.

21 So we implore you, please deny Tampa
22 Electric's profit-driven rate hikes, and provide
23 some relief for struggling families.

24 Thank you.

25 (Applause from the audience.)

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Next three.

2 MR. PONCE: So the last person signed up
3 on-line that I have is Rammohan Ramadoss. After
4 that, we will be moving to the in-person sign-ups,
5 starting with Gerald Dyfus.

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: I also have Russ Newlin on
7 the list.

8 MR. PONCE: So Rammohan Ramadoss and Gerald
9 Dyfus.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Mr. Ramadoss. Yeah, let's
11 go ahead. You are recognized, Mr. Newlin. I don't
12 see Mr. Ramadoss in the room.

13 MR. NEWLIN: Thank you.

14 The most expensive rates in the country, I
15 heard that on the radio this morning while
16 commuting here myself. I was a little surprised.
17 I did sign up for this, but I didn't know that we
18 would be in the top three of 159. That's
19 remarkable.

20 Most electricity rates increases act as
21 regressive tax on the poor. If a rich person has
22 to pay more for electricity, they barely notice. A
23 person that -- and there -- this may even be the
24 majority of residents in Florida who has no income
25 left over after paying for housing, insurance,

1 medicine, food, water, student loans and
2 transportation, may have nothing left over to give
3 you. They may be rotating the bills they won't pay
4 this month. They may have to give up a beloved pet
5 they can no longer afford to feed. Imagine the
6 cruelty of that to a child.

7 We do need more capacity and more clean
8 energy. Business is doing very well here. Profits
9 are very high, and they use a lot of electricity.
10 Tax them. Get them to buy more solar panels to
11 ease their electricity burden. People living in
12 rental housing don't have that option to build
13 solar panels on their apartments.

14 Where does that tax go, that tax on the poor,
15 that regressive tax and the higher income -- and
16 higher tax -- higher, excuse me, electricity rates?
17 Who gets that? Shareholders. Shareholders in TECO
18 get that. The CEO of TECO, if he gets paid in
19 stock, receives that. And how are CEOs judged
20 these days? They are judged by how high their
21 stock price is.

22 We want to also make sure that if there is
23 this trial year in 2025, that TECO is not allowed
24 to buy back its own stock to artificially inflate
25 the price of its own stock with money given to it

1 by the poor, who have no choice, who had to use
2 that for air conditioning, and to pump water, and
3 to shower in the morning.

4 Thank you very much for your time.

5 (Applause from the audience.)

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Next up is Gerald --

9 MR. DYFUS: Dyfus.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Dyfus. Thank you.

11 MR. DYFUS: Hello. I am frugal on my electric
12 bill. I don't use many kilowatt hours a month, and
13 as such, my bill for the last five years as doubled
14 because of the unconscionable increase in the
15 monthly fee. It went from 12 to 25 basically.

16 The -- let me think here. The -- giving the
17 money to TECO at such a high rate, nine percent is
18 a fine amount for them for-profit. There is no
19 reason they need to go to 11.5 percent. There is
20 no need for them to put in that bill at my -- at
21 our expense.

22 We should not be subsidizing commercial people
23 on the backs of the people. If you do that, it's
24 unconscionable. I mean, commercial people can pay
25 their damn way -- their own way in that.

1 The -- I mean, you keep having fossil fuel
2 generation increases because they make a profit
3 when they build fossil fuel -- (INAUDIBLE) -- but
4 the problem there is very shortly, because
5 renewable energy costs five cents a kilowatt hour.
6 Fossil fuel energy costs 12 cents a kilowatt hour.
7 Why are we still building fossil fuel plants?

8 On the coal plant, at Big Bend, why are we
9 still using coal? We have a huge supply right
10 across the street, a biomass from the county, it
11 can be gasified and shipped over there and used as
12 a backup. You could put in solar, what they call
13 concentrated solar with storage and use that on
14 that property too plus PV, and -- because the cost
15 of fossil fuel pollution is high, easily double
16 what they charge for it. And that also is
17 regressively back onto the people to pay it. They
18 buy profits, socialize the cost.

19 The future here is going to change radically.
20 The -- with costs of home solar, renewable energy
21 and batteries, the parts costs have dropped 50
22 percent in the last few years. The price of
23 batteries for home is about to drop 65, 70 percent.
24 And because of that, we will be able to,
25 homeowners, when they get tired of these high

1 rates, are just going to go off grid because it's
2 cheaper and that. And no matter what, even if they
3 don't go off grid, a lot more are going to add
4 solar, batteries and EVs with vehicle to grid, and
5 that is going to seriously cut demand for power
6 from the utility.

7 The utility has a duty to shrink as well as
8 grow. And demand is going to shrink because 50
9 percent likely homes, buildings, businesses are
10 going to switch to solar because it's five cents a
11 kilowatt hour, and that. The -- and so they don't
12 -- and a lot of them, you know, because of monthly
13 -- for me, because of a monthly bill, I am about to
14 go off grid, because it costs me 45 cent because of
15 that high rate.

16 Let me see. What we really need is realtime
17 pricing. So the people who make the power and sell
18 it -- you know, regular people. I am not talking
19 about y'all -- can get a reasonable price for their
20 clean power that they are providing on demand. I
21 am not talking solar. I am talking on demand power
22 and that, clean homes between homes, buildings and
23 businesses and electric vehicles with the ETT,
24 which buy/sell power cheap, and then sells it at
25 peak price, will solve pretty much all the demand

1 problems because all up, that's -- in 10 years,
2 that's going to be about a terawatt hour of storage
3 and half a terawatt hour of generation, which is
4 right on up there with a large fraction of Florida
5 demand. So we really need to start looking at
6 this.

7 I mean, all -- almost all new electric
8 vehicles have ETT allowed. And Tesla, next year,
9 is going to do it. And this is going to radically
10 change things.

11 And with the money that they are spending on
12 all these -- on new fossil fuel generation, and
13 maintaining fossil fuel generation, it's pretty
14 much going to be stranded. So we need to start
15 looking to the future sources that we are going to
16 be having, and there is really not much call --
17 after 15 years, there is really no need for fossil
18 fuels in Florida because solar, tidal, concentrated
19 solar and storage -- that's thermal -- biomass, we
20 have huge amounts of biomass going the race every
21 day beating back the jungle trying to keep our
22 lawns from overgrowing and everything else.

23 So we really need a total change in how we
24 think about how power is delivered to our
25 customers. The thing is, is we -- I mean, prices

1 shouldn't be going up. They should be going down,
2 because I just found out now, they have more solar
3 than I thought, and solar we pay for by the way, so
4 TECO didn't have to buy it. They just own it
5 because we pay for it. Now they want to charge
6 five cents more for it. I mean, the -- so that
7 needs to be adjusted too, because we really don't
8 need to be -- they have incentive to build new
9 fossil fuel plants and that. That has to be gone.
10 I mean, it's just not really, really good.

11 Let me think here. Coal plant, yeah. Data --

12 Distributed generation is the future, and we
13 really need to embrace it in order for people to
14 get clean power that doesn't poison you, that
15 doesn't cause global warming, doesn't cause the
16 seas to rise, doesn't cause, you know, people going
17 to hospitals because they are sick because, you
18 know, most of the air -- most of the breathing and
19 heart, a lot of that comes direct -- cause directly
20 from pollution causing sickness and that, like, 20
21 percent of the national of what the United States
22 government pays for Medicaid and Medicare comes
23 from pollution damage to health.

24 So let's stop the corporate welfare, TECO, and
25 try to get back to give us a good future for our

1 power that doesn't poison us, and doesn't break our
2 bank accounts.

3 Thank you.

4 (Applause from the audience.)

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 (Applause from the audience.)

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Before we move to the next
9 three -- before we move to the next three, there is
10 -- there is a point where I think we were handed
11 some additional names and I don't know if those
12 folks have been sworn in. By chance, do you have
13 any -- well, actually, I haven't been handed all
14 but one.

15 MR. PONCE: Just to confirm, yes, we did get
16 two or three more, so I'm not sure if those people
17 have been sworn yet or not.

18 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: So we are going to go --
19 when we get to -- I am sorry for the housekeeping
20 -- when we get to number 12, I am going to ask that
21 folks to be sworn in at that point.

22 MR. PONCE: That sounds -- matches with my
23 records as well.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Perfect. Let's move
25 into the next three.

1 MR. PONCE: The next three are Xawanna
2 Crawford, Celeste Judge Johnson and Marjorie
3 Guevara.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Xawanna Gawford. Xawanna
5 Gawford.

6 MS. CRAWFORD: Crawford. It's Tawanna
7 Crawford.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Oh.

9 MR. PONCE: Maybe I should have said this in
10 the past, but I apologize for anyone's names that I
11 got wrong today.

12 MS. CRAWFORD: And Celeste is not here. She
13 had to work.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: You are recognized, when
15 you are ready.

16 MS. CRAWFORD: Good morning. My name is
17 Tawanna Crawford, and I am a Hillsborough County
18 resident. I am also with Florida Rising.

19 I come today to speak on behalf of me being a
20 disabled person. Last month was my birthday, May
21 8th, and thanks, but no thanks to the people, y'all
22 cut the lights off on my birthday and I was on a
23 program, but that ain't helping none either because
24 I get a once-a-month disability check, and I have
25 been kicked off the program until y'all told me,

1 and by the time y'all send my bill out, after I get
2 my once-a-month income, I ain't been able to pay
3 it, so it's like my bill is piling up and y'all are
4 penalizing me for something that y'all doing, which
5 is sending the bill out double to me, and expecting
6 me to pay it on my own time when I don't get
7 nothing but disability, SSI, once a month at the
8 beginning of the month. And y'all sending me a
9 bill that's been due at the end of the month before
10 I get my check to pay it. So please take
11 consideration in those that's in the situation that
12 I am in too, take into consideration don't give
13 that raise to them, please.

14 I was in the midst of my lights being turned
15 off on my birthday, I lost my insulin because they
16 was in the refrigerator, my night insulin. And I
17 only went to endocrinology yesterday, and it's hard
18 for me trying to get it back up because my insulin
19 don't want to go for all that insulin that I lost.

20 Thank you for letting me share, and y'all have
21 a blessed day.

22 (Applause from the audience.)

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Mr. Ponce has a quick question for you.

1 MR. TRIERWEILER: I think he has some
2 questions for you.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir.

4 BY MR. PONCE:

5 **Q You mentioned that TECO discontinued the**
6 **power. I want to make sure, have you had your power**
7 **restored since then?**

8 A Yes, but it was late that night. I paid that
9 one that they turned back on, which was \$426, and now
10 y'all telling me I got to pay another \$426 by the 24th
11 of this month. How and why?

12 **Q Thank you.**

13 **CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next up -- ma'am, thank you**
14 **for your testimony.**

15 MS. CRAWFORD: You are welcome. Thank you for
16 listening.

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next up, we have Marjorie
18 Guevara. Ms. Guevara, you are recognized when you
19 are ready.

20 MS. GUEVARA: I just want to thank you guys
21 for listening to us. I didn't know this was so
22 formal. I'm sorry, I am just super nervous.

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Be calm, relax.

24 THE WITNESS: Be calm and relax. You are all
25 in suits.

1 My name is Marjorie Graciela Guevara, I am on
2 behalf of my family, my neighbors and a lot of
3 organizations that I am part in my community.

4 The rate increase -- I know somebody said say
5 ditto if -- I say ditto to the person with six
6 kids. I am not a single mom. I will not ever have
7 kids in this lifetime, and I can relate to her
8 struggles. The rate increase has dire consequences
9 in our communities.

10 I used volunteer in a free clinic here. It
11 was a Christian clinic, and I remember this patient
12 that used to have to -- he didn't have enough food
13 for the day, and so he would have to take a little
14 bit, and if he had to go on a bike, he would have
15 to, like, eat whatever portion of food that he had
16 and go to his job on his bike, and sometimes his
17 insulin wouldn't be controlled and he would have
18 seizures. And throughout his life, he really,
19 really struggled with this. His adult life, he
20 really, really struggled. He had seizures at work.
21 He had seizures coming back from work. He couldn't
22 control it because he didn't have enough insulin,
23 and he didn't have enough food. This patient
24 passed away.

25 And without breaking HIPAA -- and it was a

1 small clinic, and it was a Christian clinic, we
2 were really close. We were invited to his -- it
3 wasn't even a funeral. I think here in the states
4 you guys call it, like, a good-bye, like, just --
5 and it was in a park where people in his community
6 couldn't even afford to throw him a funeral.

7 And I remember this, and it impacted me so
8 deeply because I want to do Doctors Without Borders
9 one day. I want to apply, and the reason that I
10 haven't been able to is because I am helping my
11 parents pay their electric bill right now. I am
12 helping my parents pay their mortgage.

13 My dad works over 40 hours in the heat. He
14 comes home and he is just kind of like, oh, my
15 gosh, Graciela, it's so hot. I feel like I am
16 going to die, and it breaks my heart because my dad
17 is old. My dad is an older man that hasn't been
18 given the opportunity to save for his retirement,
19 and he is here trying to help me get into medical
20 school, but at the end of the day, he doesn't have
21 the means. He doesn't have the means to be, like,
22 Graciela, sit down and study for your MCAT. Sit
23 down. You graduated USF. You deserve to study for
24 your MCAT. We don't have that. We don't have that
25 in my house.

1 And I feel like all our struggles are
2 interconnected, as minorities, as women, as poor
3 people, as people of color, our struggles are
4 interconnected, and it will affect us all as a
5 community, but unevenly.

6 The people from this clinic, it will affect
7 them way more than it will affect me in my
8 lifetime. The people that have cancer, like my
9 mother, she's a cancer survivor, and she's paying
10 six bills at the same time, and she has medical
11 insurance. It just doesn't cover it all.

12 So it's really hard to be vulnerable, and it's
13 really nerve-racking to be in front of cameras
14 being like, hey, by the way, we are -- it's a
15 struggle here.

16 We don't want to be the scapegoats. My
17 community doesn't want to be the scapegoat for
18 TECO. I really want to invest in clean energy. I
19 know that I will probably not see the full blown
20 effects of global warming, but your kids will, and
21 Krystal's kids will, and my neighbors' kids will.

22 My neighbor, who is about 80 years old, has
23 been living in that house since before he was born,
24 like -- not before he was born. Like, his parents
25 were in the house, you know what I mean? Like, he

1 was raised in the house. He's told me about the
2 destruction that went down in the neighborhood.
3 And I am trying to go inside, he is like, let me
4 tell you -- and I'm like, sir, please give me a
5 break, like, I don't have time to talk right now,
6 I'm so stress. And he is just like so in love with
7 his community. So in love with Tampa. So in love.
8 And he is going to be struggling with his bills,
9 with his electric bill because he stays at home all
10 day. He can not lower the temperature the way we
11 can in my house.

12 I know that you said that you are not the ones
13 that proposed this, but you are the ones that make
14 the decision, and you are the only ones that will
15 be able to say no. When the future person, which
16 is not hypothetical -- it's my neighbors, it's my
17 friends, it's my community -- have to pick between
18 food on their table and paying their electric bill,
19 that falls on your hands.

20 The next patient that dies because they are
21 not able to pay their electric bill, because they
22 had to go to work and they are rationing their
23 insulin, and they are not able to pay for their
24 food, that falls on your hands. You guys are the
25 only ones in this whole room that can say and can

1 say no.

2 We don't deserve this as a community, and you
3 guys are human beings.

4 And I thank you so much for your individual
5 attention. I can only see Mr. Andrew Fay from back
6 there, and he was, like, sharp, focused the whole
7 time, like was getting the best of me, and every
8 time I would look up, you are making sometimes eye
9 contact, and I really, really appreciate it. And I
10 pray that you guys touched into your humility in
11 saying no to the hike, because I think at the end
12 of the day, people matter, people matter over
13 profit.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause from the audience.)

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 The next three --

19 MR. PONCE: The next three customers that we
20 have signed up to offer sworn testimony are Jason
21 Ferger, Sabine Prather and Joe Bradley.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Jason Ferger, you are
23 recognized, sir, when you are ready.

24 MR. FERGER: Good afternoon, Commissioners,
25 PSC staff, TECO representatives, and most

1 importantly, all my fellow citizens of Hillsborough
2 County who are TECO customers.

3 I had no idea how this meeting was going to
4 run. I have spoken at school board meetings,
5 county commission meetings, and this is a new one
6 for me.

7 I am really here today to speak about the
8 failures, really the failures of Karen Sparkman and
9 the rest of the folks at TECO because nobody really
10 pays attention to it. You pay your bill. You
11 know, I am a business owner, so I love profit. The
12 more profit I can make. I am a small business
13 owner. But I also understand that when I get that
14 TECO bill every month, that comes out of my profit.

15 So more importantly, I just want to point out
16 two things, because on November 2nd of '23, there
17 was an ABC Action News, TECO reducing bills 11
18 percent starting in January. Fuel costs may give
19 Duke Energy and TECO customers a break. That was
20 April 2nd of this year, '24, by WUSF. And then on
21 November 1st, also of '23, WTST.com says, Tampa
22 Electric, Duke Energy set the lower '24 electric
23 bill rates.

24 So personally, I went out and got new windows.
25 The three front windows in my house cost \$16,000.

1 And I was like, okay, great. Thank you. It is
2 making a huge difference in that room. So I called
3 TECO up and said, my builder said that there is
4 some sort of an energy rebate. How does that work?
5 So I get it, and guess how much I am going to get
6 back. \$79. That's doesn't help, but I'm getting
7 \$79.

8 And then on May -- let me just get the dates
9 here because this, in my weird mind, is important.
10 I believe it was like May 28th I decided to come
11 here. May 29th I called TECO. I was on the phone
12 for over 40 minutes with a representative asking
13 for them to help me understand. I am just one
14 person, I understand, so this bill is actually a
15 little confusing. There is a whole bunch of
16 different things on there. If I look at it as a
17 layman, it looks like my bill is going to go up at
18 least 30 percent.

19 The first representative did not have access
20 to what I was asking about. This piece of paper
21 here, they did not have access to it. It took
22 about 25 minutes to the manager, his name was Mike,
23 on the phone.

24 I asked him, can you explain to me how this
25 current proposed in '25, '26 and '27, how is that

1 going to affect me? How can I judge? And there
2 really is no way for the average consumer to
3 determine what their rate is going to be.

4 I have a healthy skepticism of government.
5 You know, in most cases, when I go to a school
6 board or county commissioner meeting and there is a
7 board agenda item that was up before them, 99
8 percent of the time, that decision is already made.
9 If it's on that agenda item, that is moving
10 forward. Rarely, very rarely does that -- that
11 item that is on that agenda in most government
12 entities get voted down.

13 So I have a suspicion, I have a belief, based
14 on a lot of years of previous experience, that the
15 decision is already made. But I am looking at you
16 five today, and I hope that's not the case. I hope
17 that all these folks and myself that have come here
18 and spoke before you, you know, have moved you,
19 because -- and I want to thank actually the first
20 college student, she brought up a couple points, I
21 cannot remember her name, but she was talking about
22 the shareholder meeting.

23 I also want to thank LULAC -- did I pronounce
24 that right? Because they brought up some points
25 that had I not come to this meeting here today, I

1 would have never known. And that was the problem
2 with these types of things, you know, our energy
3 one of the only things, only commodity out there
4 that the average consumer has no ability to change.
5 I am going to go fuel my car, guess what, I got a
6 lot of choices. You know, there is Upside, you can
7 go Upside and get 10 cents back per gallon, or I
8 can drive, you know, from Bloomingdale, I can drive
9 down Bloomingdale Avenue to Riverview and pay 15
10 cents less a gallon, even though it's 10 miles,
11 actually not even 10 miles, five miles. Water
12 bills, you know, paying water, if you have enough
13 money, you can drill your own well. But this is
14 the only commodity out there that people have no
15 choice in what they consume. Even though I have
16 gone out and gotten new air conditioner systems,
17 brand new windows that are energy efficient,
18 hurricane proof, the whole deal. When I look at my
19 energy bill all these years, you know, the little
20 blue was this year, the bog was last year. I am
21 using less, but my rates are going up.

22 And so thank you for your time. Thank you for
23 everybody else that has given their testimony here
24 today. Obviously, it's a tough decision, but
25 again, I wanted to just stress failures by Karen

1 Sparkman and the rest of the team of people who,
2 when somebody calls into their customer service
3 department to ask questions, and have the
4 information right there in front of them.

5 Me, the citizens of Hillsborough County, and
6 the other lady who spoke earlier, somebody blew up
7 her phone, like, four times, she said, we -- we are
8 not getting answers, at least we are not, her and
9 I, we are not getting the answers that we asked,
10 and we were referred to the website.

11 And if you guys know this, I went on there,
12 read some of the testimony, hundreds upon hundreds
13 of pages of sworn testimony. I pulled up a couple,
14 and guess who they are, they are all TECO people
15 testifying on why they need this rate increase.

16 So I implore TECO, I implore whoever else is
17 in charge, including the Public Service Commission,
18 please do something about making it more
19 transparent. Make it more easier to understand for
20 the average consumer, because it's not, it just is
21 not. It's not -- it's not right. You know, you
22 cannot overcommunicate, you cannot make it simple
23 enough. If they really wanted to make it easier
24 for people, you put in -- here's my bill right
25 here. Here is what your bill is. You use the same

1 amount of electricity, make sure here's what it's
2 going to be, but you can't. Some of those things
3 are variable. Some of them are hidden. And you
4 are getting charged for stuff that's in here, you
5 can't even see it, is that correct? Absolutely
6 it's correct.

7 So thank you for your time. Best of luck as
8 you make your decision, and I hope that you, the
9 five of you, or at least three of the five of you,
10 that I'm wrong, and I believe that this decision
11 has already been made.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause from the audience.)

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Next up -- next up Sabine Prather. Ma'am, you
17 are recognized when you are ready.

18 MS. PRATHER: Thank you. Sabine Prather, if
19 that matters.

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sorry.

21 MS. PRATHER: That's okay.

22 I am a TECO customer, and I am a ratepayer. I
23 am also -- I just, surprisingly, recently retired
24 this summer. My husband is retired and a disabled
25 veteran. And I just got my TECO bill yesterday.

1 And from the month before to this month, it's an
2 increase, and this is -- the increase is almost
3 double. The bill is almost double, and we are not,
4 you know, we don't use -- our house is not as cold
5 as it is in here. It's, you know, not
6 unreasonable.

7 Already, the rates are skyrocketing because of
8 the heat here in Florida, and the heat is because
9 of climate change. And TECO is proposing these
10 rate increases to build more, like a fracking
11 plant, and, you know, still investing in fossil
12 fuels when there is so much solar going on here.

13 I can't get solar. We can't get solar right
14 now, and we would if we could, definitely, but the
15 rate -- the base rate is still going to increase.
16 It looks like it's going to be 30 percent. And
17 that's just the first rate increase. And it's just
18 not fair to us customers who are residential
19 customers, that industrial customers don't get any
20 of this increase. And it shouldn't be an increase
21 at all because solar is out there, and they have --
22 I know they have panels out there. I have seen
23 them. And it's much cheaper than fossil fuels to
24 do it.

25 So I do hope that you guys will consider what

1 -- what the regular people are suffering through,
2 because we are on a fixed income, and I don't know
3 how we are going to afford a 30-percent increase
4 that's already -- I don't know how we are going to
5 do it. So thank you.

6 (Applause from the audience.)

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 Next up is Joe Bradley. Joe Bradley.

10 Not seeing Mr. Bradley. Let's move to the
11 next three.

12 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
13 their sworn testimony are Barbara Washington, Ina
14 Kelly and Denise Herndon.

15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Barbara Washington.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She already --

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Oh, she's already went.
18 Okay.

19 Then Ina Kelly?

20 MS. KELLY: Thank you guys. I am going to
21 issue the word environmental degradation.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Do you mind speaking into
23 the microphone?

24 MS. KELLY: I don't know if I can hold it.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Do you mind directing your

1 comments to us?

2 MS. KELLY: Okay. Sorry.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: No worries.

4 MS. KELLY: Environmental degradation. My
5 community of East 24th Ave, Ybor City and 13th
6 street, we have the most beautiful canopy of trees,
7 but TECO do not maintain the trees, and we have
8 garbage piled up on garbage. And I have to see
9 people drop their pants and go to the bathroom, et
10 cetera, dead animals, because TECO nor the City
11 will not maintain that area, and it's such -- it
12 would be such a walkable community, a cyclable
13 community, but we don't have.

14 And I used to be boasting to my family -- I
15 have a large family, and I boast to old and young,
16 I had the lowest electric bill five years ago, and
17 now my bill has tripled, and now my laundry
18 outside. I haven't owned a dryer since my son,
19 which is a professor that teaches in the prison,
20 one of his staff, since then I have not had a
21 dryer. And I have to forego my fruits and veggies,
22 which, to me, is more valuable than the
23 electricity, to be able to be standing here.

24 I have been a caregiver over 50 years here in
25 Florida. I have cared for many wealthy people, and

1 I see how the wealthy live, and I see that they
2 have a heart, some don't have heart. And our city
3 government, and TECO needs to get a, heart because
4 the air is musty and the homeless have nowhere to
5 go, so they come to the canopy on the corner and
6 they -- they do whatever they have to do, and I
7 have to watch that because environmental
8 degradation for provision for the homeless is nil
9 in that area.

10 Just close your eyes and think of you walking
11 from Ybor City to MLK to the food kitchen, and you
12 have to -- there is not a spot where you can go to
13 the bathroom. There is none. McDonald's will not
14 allow you to go in, and you have to find a way to
15 go, the homeless, the mental, I've watched them do
16 number one, number two, and I have offered them
17 water, encouraged them to try to get to the corner,
18 because I can't walk to visit my elderly seniors.
19 I can't walk through there, so I have got to go two
20 or three blocks towards 15th Street and backtrack
21 to go down to 10th and 25th to go visit Mr.
22 Bradley. He is 97 years old. He is an electrical
23 engineer. He feeds the birds. He feeds the cats,
24 and he gives to the homeless.

25 Now, us Christians, we should be practicing

1 what we preach. Bless you.

2 (Applause from the audience.)

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Next up is Denise Herndon. Denise, you are
6 recognized.

7 MS. HERNDON: Yes. Hello, I am Denise
8 Herndon, and I have lived in my home almost 25
9 years this August. Fortunately, my mortgage is
10 only 644 since I moved in my home so long, but my
11 electric bill, I am on a very fixed income. I have
12 been a respiratory therapist over 30 years and
13 haven't been able to work at it for five years
14 because of a brain injury. You can't physically
15 see my brain injury unless I turn around real fast
16 and I get dizzy. I can't read properly. I can't
17 do math properly. I can't distinguish the distance
18 of a car and stuff. So I am on a very limited
19 income now.

20 What I do to keep my electric bill down is I
21 have -- my AC went out and I don't have the money
22 to replace the central AC, so I bought a window
23 unit. I live in a 900-square-foot home. I section
24 off half of my house with a sheet to keep the AC in
25 half of it because window units don't cover 900

1 square feet. And even if they did, I don't have
2 the money to cover that.

3 With this heat that we have been having, my AC
4 window unit will not turn off, and so I had to
5 manually turn it on and off yesterday. Today, when
6 I left the house, I left it turned off. I have a
7 dog in my home with long hair. She's the one
8 that's going to be suffering. I have fans in
9 there, and I am praying that she will be okay when
10 I come back home.

11 The other things I do to cut down on my
12 electric bill is I only turn my hot water heater on
13 when I need to use it. I can take a shower three
14 times on my 40-gallon hot water heater. I am
15 fortunate I have a well, so I don't have an
16 exorbitant water bill.

17 I cannot afford these rate increases. What
18 hasn't been mentioned here, I started going to
19 county commissioners meeting, and I was so
20 disgusted to see that there was only one county
21 commissioner, Pat Kemp, and only one that attended
22 this meeting today, Pat Kemp, that voted down
23 carbon capture.

24 Carbon capture is a joke. TECO wants to spend
25 a lot of money on carbon capture, and that's a big

1 waste of money. Is some of this rate increase
2 going to pay for that?

3 They were at the county commission meeting,
4 oh, it's going not going to cost Hillsborough
5 County anything. No, it's going to cost the people
6 paying the bills. That's who it's going to cost.

7 You guys are the ones who can stop this rate
8 hike, because it's not just for things that they
9 absolutely need. Carbon capture was made by our
10 God, if you believe in a God, and that's trees and
11 plants. We need to stop this raping of our world
12 right now.

13 I know an airplane pilot who says, oh, there
14 is woods all over the place. Yes, but that doesn't
15 cover everything. Animals have to live there. We
16 congregate in areas, and we need those trees.
17 That's our natural carbon capture.

18 We need to stop this rate hike that TECO,
19 Duke -- what I would really like to see is our
20 electric deregulated. Let us go and choose our
21 electric company, then these people will stop
22 trying to rape us with these rates, because we have
23 no other choice but to take what they have to give
24 us. And you guys here can vote down this rate
25 increase, because they are wanting to spend a lot

1 of money on this carbon capture, and it's going to
2 return a small, small amount, so please do not
3 increase our rates.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause from the audience.)

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 I have got about eight more folks that have
9 signed up. I am not sure if there is anyone else
10 in the room that has not signed up yet. The new
11 list that I have are the ones that came in after we
12 started, have those folks been sworn in?

13 So if you -- if you have not spoken yet and
14 you were not here when we initially swore everybody
15 in at the start of the meeting, do you mind
16 standing up to be sworn in? Just this individual?
17 Nobody else?

18 Ma'am, do you mind raising your right hand?

19 Do you affirm -- do you swear and affirm that
20 what you are going to say today is the truth?

21 THE WITNESS: Oh, exactly. Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you. Thank you. I
23 think we are good.

24 Mr. Ponce, move to the next three.

25 MR. PONCE: So the next three names are, it

1 looks like Robi Lockett, Cameron Pressey and Mary
2 Ellen Gottlieb.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Robi Lockett.

4 MS. LOCKETT: It's Robin.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Oh, Robin. I am sorry.

6 MS. LOCKETT: It's my handwriting.

7 MR. PONCE: I apologize.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ma'am, you are recognized.

9 MS. LOCKETT: Okay. Hi, my name is Robin
10 Lockett. I am with Florida Rising, and I got some
11 questions for a private little segment. Can you
12 squeeze blood from a turnip? And the answer of
13 that would be no, right?

14 TECO is using funny math to pull over the eyes
15 of the -- to pull wool over the eyes of the public,
16 that at the end of the day, they were -- they are
17 raising rates by \$20 in the new year.

18 You have heard testimonies this morning -- and
19 Florida Rising empowers members to fight for issues
20 that concern them, so this is part of that process.
21 You have heard a lot of testimony this morning in
22 regards to how this rate increase will affect the
23 seniors, the community. Now, that's when the rate
24 increase hits, but it's affecting them now. They
25 are robbing Paul to pay Peter now, and this rate

1 increase will not help.

2 We are in a housing crisis. Don't let anybody
3 fool you. We are in a housing crisis. People
4 don't have anywhere to live to even pay a light
5 bill these days, so they are making decisions in
6 regards to medicine, paying their rent, even paying
7 the light bill.

8 The programs that TECO, as one of the members
9 identified, you know, they have programs, right?
10 But what about those programs being set up for
11 seniors that are on a fixed income, so when their
12 check comes and -- their check comes, they won't be
13 -- they won't have to pay it late, so the dates are
14 moved around to whenever they receive their check,
15 right? Because what happens is if you are late on
16 those programs, now all the money that they held
17 back, that's why Ms. Tawanna owed \$436 at one time,
18 and now she owes another \$400. So they held back
19 part of the bill, and once you are late and you are
20 thrown off the program, now you are -- now that
21 money, all the money that they held back, it has to
22 come -- it has to come from somewhere. Thankfully,
23 her church helped her out.

24 So even just being mindful, because right now
25 in life, we have to think outside of the box. We

1 have to look at a bigger picture because of
2 everything that's hitting us right now. Like I
3 said, rent, mortgage, taxes, right? Property
4 taxes. Now insurance companies are forcing people
5 to put roofs on their homes with a possibility. So
6 everybody has control over somebody else's money,
7 and that's not fair, right? And we need -- we need
8 a say-so in it, but the Commission here, you do
9 have a say-so. You have power.

10 11.5 percent increase is what I am hearing.
11 Some say, hey -- and what is that Nova Scotia?
12 Wherever it is -- nine percent. I say half of the
13 11.5, if you are going to -- if you are going to
14 give a rate increase, do half of the 11.5 percent.
15 Make it lower than nine percent, because people are
16 struggling. And hopefully the stories, the
17 testimonies -- not even the stories, because these
18 are real life people, so hopefully the testimonies
19 that have been given to you by you today pulls on
20 your heart string. Make you think of your mother,
21 your cousin or your grandmother, or somebody is
22 relatable to these stories for you guys, to make a
23 decision that people can't afford this.

24 And TECO is one variable that nobody has a
25 choice in, because they -- they -- it's a monopoly.

1 They own it. So they can -- they can do whatever
2 they want to through you guys, but you have the
3 power not to allow them to do that.

4 So what I am asking is that you don't approve
5 the -- the rate increase. I do understand
6 business. I understand that it's a profit --
7 profitable -- for-profit company. But again, can
8 you squeeze blood from a turnip?

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 (Applause from the audience.)

13 MR. PRESSEY: Thank you. Thanks for having us
14 today. My name is Cam. I am a Tampa resident and
15 TECO ratepayer. I am also a member of Tampa BSA, a
16 community group of working class folks organizing
17 to materially improve our lives and transform
18 society.

19 I am also a member of the Hillsborough
20 Affordable Energy Coalition, a diverse coalition of
21 community members, an organization struggling to
22 keep our energy costs down and keep people safe in
23 their homes. We certainly don't all share the same
24 politics, but we all share our commitment to
25 protecting our community in pushing back against

1 unjust rate hikes that threaten the housing
2 security and lives of our families and neighbors.

3 So with that being said, I am here today to
4 speak in opposition to the proposed rate hikes,
5 share my personal experience as a TECO ratepayer,
6 and ask the Public Service Commission to reject
7 TECO's proposal.

8 I am a tenant, and I am being squeezed by
9 bills in all directions, on rent, groceries,
10 transportation, college debt, insurance, health
11 care and on energy bills. The base rate increase
12 threatens my ability to keep my roof over my head
13 and stay in my apartment, which is already cheaper
14 than many units in the area.

15 As a tenant, I don't have the option to put
16 solar panels on my roof. My energy bill is highest
17 during the summer, and I am already looking at
18 extremely high costs approaching \$200 a month. So
19 you will agree with me that extremely surprised
20 some folks here are paying over 400, even \$500 a
21 month. That's criminal.

22 My air conditioning was down for nearly four
23 days last week, and that was difficult enough. A
24 base rate increase and potentially losing my power
25 plant sounds like a nightmare, a nightmare that

1 threatens lives. I know fear less for my own life,
2 the threat of my grandparents, friends with chronic
3 health issues, and older neighbors losing their
4 power and AC, especially right now, terrifies me.

5 I will be forthcoming with my own views
6 because I appreciate everyone's attendance today
7 and I want to challenge us all.

8 I am of the opinion that we need to swiftly
9 democratize and deprivatize our energy grid. While
10 this hearing today might be a step towards
11 democracy, and while I appreciate you, the PSC,
12 holding this industry hearing, the fact that TECO
13 tries to quietly approve these rate cases without
14 these hearings, and that our community needed to
15 shout and beg for this in-district hearing is
16 extremely telling.

17 Further, I am insulted when TECO applauds
18 themselves for moving off coal, quote/unquote, when
19 they are still using dirty and dangerous fracked
20 energy, fracked gas, and sourcing 85 percent of our
21 energy from gas. Why is a company that makes
22 billions of dollars in revenue, and asking for over
23 a 10-percent ROI need hundreds of millions of more
24 dollars? To me, this sounds dishonest and
25 misleading.

1 We certainly need to invest in more solar and
2 more renewable energy, but the fact the matter is
3 that the money already exists to do so.

4 I am of the opinion that energy is a human
5 right and a human need, not a commodity for private
6 utilities and CEOs to extract massive profit from
7 everyday people.

8 (Applause from the audience.)

9 MR. PRESSEY: In my opinion, TECO is
10 exploiting our basic needs in exchange for private
11 profit, misleading the public, and trying to
12 deceive you, the PSC, to approve these egregious
13 rate hikes.

14 I would like to repeat what a previous speaker
15 said, this is an example of corporate greed, not
16 corporate need. The PSC can make a real difference
17 in this case. I implore you to stand with people
18 in this room and the entire community. Thank you
19 for being here, and please reject this unnecessary
20 base rate hike proposal.

21 (Applause from the audience.)

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
23 testimony today.

24 We skipped over somebody from that group. Is
25 it Arlene Nottingham or Nossington?

1 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: Arlene Washington.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Washington. She already
3 spoke.

4 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: She already spoke.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: All right. Let's move --
6 let's move to the next group of three.

7 MR. PONCE: Just to be clear, after Cameron
8 Pressey, we had Mary Ellen Gottlieb. I don't know
9 if you called her yet.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Mary Ellen Gottlieb.

11 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: She's not here.

12 MR. TRIERWEILER: Closer to the mic, please.

13 MR. PONCE: In that case, the next three
14 customers offering their sworn testimony are Lydia
15 Mehano, Brian Scott and John Wallace.

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: You are recognized when you
17 are ready.

18 MS. MEDRANO: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Lydia Medrano, and I am with LULAC. I am the LULAC
20 Tampa District Director, and I am also a TECO
21 customer, and I don't -- (INAUDIBLE) --

22 There is no proven need for the proposed hike.
23 We have increases in the past five years, and the
24 rate of increase -- of inflation is twice that
25 increase -- the rate increases.

1 The proposed increase, as you heard this
2 morning, is going to impact all people,
3 particularly the low-income people and families in
4 the marginalized communities. So I am here just to
5 say no to another power increase.

6 Thank you.

7 (Applause from the audience.)

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Brian Scott. Mr. Brian Scott.

11 Not seeing Mr. Scott in the room, John
12 Wallace. Is John Wallace here?

13 Mr. Wallace, you are recognized when you are
14 ready.

15 MR. WALLACE: Thank you.

16 Mr. Fay, I am going to give you three
17 photographs to pass through the panel, Commission,
18 to take a look at, and I will get to that in just a
19 second.

20 I have been a resident of Hillsborough County
21 now, as of this month, for 18 years. Probably what
22 other people have expressed, I can express to you
23 that I don't have a choice for electric or water.
24 I have no choice. I have to take TECO.

25 Aside from that, often sometimes, other than

1 people coming up, you have heard the numbers today
2 from a lot of people. You have heard it from AARP,
3 some of the other groups, what they are asking for
4 in this increase percentage-wise over the next
5 three years. And quiet frankly, it is
6 unconscionable.

7 But sometimes you have to look at a
8 corporation on performance as to what they are
9 doing. Other than coming to you with hat in hand
10 and asking you for this rate increase, what have
11 they been doing in the community to people like
12 myself, the county consumer?

13 That particular utility pole is three-quarters
14 of a mile from my house. I live in a small gated
15 community. There is only one way in and one way
16 out. I live four miles just north of Raymond
17 James. So basically, I have observed over the
18 years that this pole is leaning, as you can see
19 clearly in the photographs, to almost a 20-degree
20 angle. And I remember, maybe less than a year ago
21 there was a utility crew less than 500 feet away
22 from that, and one morning on my way out, I stopped
23 and pulled over to the side of the road and aid
24 said to the utility workers, I said, listen, this
25 pole over here is leaning really, really bad. And

1 they kind of just shrugged their shoulders as if to
2 say, hey, it's not our work on our work order.

3 But the point of the matter is, as you can see
4 on that pole, that utility pole, there are two
5 transformers. That is the lead pole providing
6 electricity into all the way down Mullins Road into
7 my community and others. And for me, if that pole
8 goes down during a tropical storm, myself and 271
9 other units in my development will be without
10 electricity.

11 The point of the matter, and the point that I
12 am trying to make, is this, is that if they can't
13 currently maintain what's out there even when it's
14 brought to their attention, I mean, what is the
15 performance record?

16 Another incident. 14 months ago, I had to
17 call in because a streetlight was out within the
18 gated community. TECO is responsible for providing
19 the replacement poles that go into those street
20 lamps, and it was extremely dark between myself
21 three houses to the north of me, two houses to the
22 south. I called and placed a work order to the
23 customer service line. He told me somewhere
24 between -- somewhere around three days somebody
25 would come out. After three days, I called again.

1 It ended up being just over 10 days before they
2 finally came out.

3 When the utility worker came out, he was, I
4 guess what you would call a trouble truck with a
5 bucket. And I said to the guy, I said, listen, I
6 have some real concerns here on this green, what I
7 think is a transformer box, because all of our
8 electric within the community is underground. I
9 said, every time we get a very, very heavy rain,
10 the box has four to six inches of water up against
11 it. It's right next to my driveway, because I
12 don't park -- I have more than one vehicle, and my
13 car is in -- not in the garage, out on the
14 driveway, I am afraid to even step into in my
15 vehicle thinking that I could get electrocuted.
16 Oh, no, don't worry about it. Don't worry about
17 it.

18 I told him. I said, listen, sometimes inside
19 the house, it doesn't happen often, it mostly
20 happens after a heavy rain, I get a low dimming of
21 lights and then the lights go back up. That, in my
22 research, has indicated what they call low voltage,
23 and it's where the cable, the casing on the cable
24 has given way over the years and it's a dangerous
25 situation. The guy kind of shrugged his shoulders

1 and said, listen, you have nothing to worry about.

2 Well, just two days ago, we all know and have
3 experienced -- maybe not, if you are not in the
4 immediate area -- we had a tremendous amount of
5 rain coming through from the Gulf across the area.
6 Once again this took place, and just shaving early
7 in the morning two days ago, the same thing
8 happened again. The lights dimmed down and they
9 came back up.

10 The point that I am trying to make here once
11 again is just it's a matter of the performance of
12 the company as to what they are doing to maintain,
13 because truly, I think their perspective is this,
14 we will wait for the damage to happen if a storm
15 comes through or, God forbid, a hurricane into this
16 area, if the damage occurs, what we can do we can
17 do to repair it then, but to maintain it currently,
18 I think they just -- they really don't care.

19 So I just wanted to point this out to you
20 because I feel it's very important. Once again, I
21 was kind of offended by TECO because this bill is
22 my May 22nd bill. And on page four of it, they are
23 basically telling how they got approval to lower
24 their -- lower bills for us residential customers
25 starting this month, in June. And that's just

1 because of a fuel surcharge decrease. But on page
2 eight, that's how I found out about this meeting.

3 And I also, at this time, want to thank you
4 for coming down from Tallahassee, as opposed to
5 running the meeting from up there. But it's like
6 so many people have told you, so many entities have
7 told you, you have got to look within yourselves as
8 a whole here on all perspectives as what's being
9 presented, and to really take into consideration is
10 this rate hike necessary for what they are asking,
11 and also for what they are providing?

12 Thank you very much.

13 (Applause from the audience.)

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Before Mr. Scott goes, do
15 you intend to enter those pictures into the record?

16 MR. WALLACE: Absolutely.

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Is there objection from the
18 parties?

19 MR. PONCE: No objection.

20 MR. WAHLEN: No objection.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Do you want to see the
22 pictures?

23 MR. WAHLEN: No. We would like to know where
24 the pole is broken. One of our people -- could you
25 let one of our people know here?

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: We'll show that the picture
2 is entered those into the record.

3 MR. WALLACE: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

5 MR. TRIERWEILER: I believe that's Exhibit 2?

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes. So show that as
7 Exhibit 2.

8 (Whereupon, Exhibit No. 2 was received into
9 evidence.)

10 MR. PONCE: I have a quick question.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, sir.

12 MR. PONCE: Thank you.

13 This is directed towards TECO. I wonder if
14 TECO would be willing to file a report on what
15 happens with that follow-up?

16 MR. WAHLEN: Sure.

17 MR. PONCE: My question was, I wonder if TECO
18 would be willing to file a report in this docket
19 about what happens with that follow-up?

20 MR. WAHLEN: Yes, we will.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next up, let's move to Mr.
22 John Wallace. Oh, that was Mr. Wallace. Not Mr.
23 Scott.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear back
25 here.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. So I believe we only
2 have one more person. Brian Scott, has Brian Scott
3 spoke? Mr. Scott?

4 MR. TRIERWEILER: Is there anyone on deck
5 behind Mr. Scott?

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: We've got Walter -- is it
7 Walter Smith? Then you are the last person on the
8 written list, the handwritten list I have got in
9 front of me. And then if anyone else has been
10 missed, or stepped out of the room, or whatever the
11 case may have been, we will give you an
12 opportunity, of course, to speak then. Just two
13 more on the written list.

14 So, Mr. Smith, you are recognized -- or excuse
15 me. Mr. Scott, you are recognized.

16 MR. SCOTT: This is the City Commissioners,
17 right?

18 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: No. The Florida Public
19 Service Commission, utility regulators.

20 MR. SMITH: Gotcha. Gotcha.

21 I -- I moved down here a couple years ago from
22 Kentucky, and a beautiful place, and I also clean,
23 energy consult, or help out the businesses family
24 members -- (INAUDIBLE) -- their power. So the only
25 question I have for you gentlemen and ladies is at

1 the end of the day at what level to increase these
2 rates makes sense to the community that you guys
3 are serving, right? I mean, you guys are living in
4 the community, so if your neighbors, your friends,
5 your family are all on the same page, when you look
6 at this -- this global entity that -- (INAUDIBLE)
7 -- in 2015, when they sold it to this Canadian
8 company, Emera has no ties to the community. So
9 it's almost like they you call yourself local and
10 it's not local.

11 So I just ask you the question, you know, how
12 can you sleep at night if so many people that is in
13 your community sharing today the pain, that's --
14 (INAUDIBLE) -- but only time will tell what you
15 guys decisions will be. And then not only will you
16 look at yourself in the mirror, but you also will
17 look at your community next week, next month, next
18 year as these rates will increase, and I just have
19 on this piece of paper right here -- I'll leave it
20 at that. And I thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 (Applause from the audience.)

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next up Walter Smith.

25 Sir, you are recognized when you are ready.

1 MR. SMITH: Get sworn in?

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: If you have not been sworn
3 in, do you mind raising your right hand?

4 Do you swear and affirm that what you state
5 today will be the truth?

6 MR. SMITH: I do.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

8 MR. SMITH: Good afternoon, members of the
9 Commission and to my colleagues and public. My
10 name is Walter L. Smith, II. I am an environmental
11 engineer epidemiologist, but I am also the lead
12 representative for Sierra Club's Beyond Coal
13 campaign.

14 I am here today to speak out against the rate
15 hike. The simple truth being presented here today
16 that you have heard from people and there
17 experiences, I'm going to go there. I am going to
18 ask you to go there today, right now.

19 My mother is from Ybor City. My dad is from
20 West Town. My mother lived in the area called the
21 Boggy. And the Boggy -- anybody here know about
22 the Boggy?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, sir.

24 MR. SMITH: Okay. Y'all know about the
25 bogging --

1 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: Yep.

2 MR. SMITH: -- you don't. But you probably
3 have seen and know about the concept of the red
4 line. The Boggy was created by the concept of red
5 line. People who were presumed to be less than
6 desirable were forced to live in redlined areas.
7 People who lived in the redlined areas were forced
8 to succumb to environmental impacts that have never
9 been resolved to this day.

10 I have interviewed and organize, done my
11 research and everything else you could possibly do
12 to find out science, and to find out the
13 sustainability issues, and to find out about what
14 impacts were done. Let me share with you one thing
15 that happened in the Boggy.

16 I interviewed a gentleman who is 78 years old,
17 who let me know that he never understood why there
18 was a TECO substation at the end of 12th avenue.
19 He didn't understand it when he was a kid, he
20 doesn't understand now.

21 There is no buffer between that substation.
22 As an engineer, anybody who is an engineer knows,
23 there is supposed to be -- there should be a buffer
24 between the industrialized operation and a
25 residential community. But because we are a

1 redline community, because you look like me,
2 because you are pour, and because it's believed
3 that you aren't going to say anything, you aren't
4 going to do anything about it, they got away with
5 it.

6 Five people at the end of that -- of that --
7 of that street, five, died of cancer. Exposures,
8 they believe it was exposures.

9 Now, let's talk about Progress Village.
10 Progress Village is within the flood zone of Tampa
11 Electric Company. The Lot, anybody know about
12 that? Anybody? Have you heard of Progress Village
13 before? No, okay.

14 Let me see, I asked the CEO, the CEO, whether
15 or not he knew about Progress Village. He told me
16 he hadn't heard of it. It's the oldest black
17 suburb in Hillsborough County, and it's within
18 their flood zone.

19 So when infrastructures are failing due to
20 100-year floods or like 100-year flood zone, flood
21 events that take place, on a light link -- on a
22 light link, that's a real serious problem. Come to
23 find out, after 60 years of its existence, it had
24 been ignored.

25 However, I did what was called a toxic bus

1 tour. What we found out from our research is, is
2 that there were unlined, 10 unlined acres, acres
3 large. 10 unlined coal ash ponds of which, when I
4 asked the CEO of Emera if he knew about them, he
5 said no. Anybody remember that?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I remember.

7 MR. SMITH: Okay. He said no.

8 Does anybody know what coal ash does to a
9 human being? Anybody know what's in coal ash?
10 (INAUDIBLE) -- but they storm protection in an
11 unlined pond, that we know through the Finch
12 project, a 2.0 project, that if a 40-foot wave
13 surge is predicted to hit Tampa Bay was to encroach
14 that area, it would make a toxic sludge that people
15 would have to be exposed to. That's a problem.
16 But because it's a redlined area with undesirable
17 people who live there, nobody cared. That's a
18 problem.

19 We have got to start recognizing what it means
20 to be on the wrong side of history.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

22 (Applause from the audience.)

23 MR. SMITH: We have got to recognize what it
24 means financially for TECO to get a team to run
25 Polk Station 1, knowing that it's economically

1 unfeasible. We've got to recognize that it's not
2 feasible to continue to run Big Bend 4, not when
3 you claim that your efforts are going towards
4 doubling the solar program as of 2023. But it
5 still has not happened. We have a problem.

6 And so the resources -- if you are spending
7 more of your resources towards antiquated machinery
8 for a coal combustion plant, who's -- who's getting
9 that cost? We are. Who's suffering that cost?

10 And you heard what those -- what that means.
11 Well, let me share with you a couple of other
12 things. There are families that have lost their
13 children, been taken out of their home as a result
14 of the energy burden that's been caused from all
15 this. There are children taken out of the home.
16 If that doesn't bother your soul, then you don't
17 have one. If it doesn't bother you to understand
18 that elderly people, or anybody, for that matter,
19 cannot keep their medication cold, then what's this
20 about to solve?

21 And if it does not bother you to understand
22 that TECO is a contributor, the second largest
23 contributor to the carbon issues that are causing
24 illnesses in Hillsborough County, causing
25 Hillsborough County to be recognized, watch this,

1 the dubious distinction of having the worst air
2 quality in the state of Florida. The American
3 Health Association -- Walter Smith -- Walter Smith
4 didn't make it up document. It's in this document.
5 And it continues to this day.

6 So imagine your child living under those
7 conditions. Imagine your child having to be on a
8 breather every night before bed. Imagine your
9 child recognizing they are thinking that that's the
10 norm because they grew up there, because that's all
11 they know. That's a problem. And if you think
12 that's okay, you are living on the wrong side of
13 Christian.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause from the audience.)

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 Mr. Ponce, do you have anybody else on any of
19 your lists?

20 MR. PONCE: No, that was the last name on my
21 list.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Same here.

23 Is there anybody here with us today that has
24 not had an opportunity to speak, either that we've
25 skipped over your name, or you stepped out, or you

1 didn't get an opportunity to stand up, or to sign
2 in?

3 Ma'am, just when you approach the mic, just
4 state your full name for the record, and whether
5 you have signed up previously or not.

6 MS. WARNER: I have a children squad in the
7 back, that's why I'm smiling.

8 My name is Allison Warner. I am with Florida
9 Rising, and speaking on behalf of the senior
10 citizens that does not qualify for any assistance.
11 They live in -- (INAUDIBLE) -- housing, and they
12 have their grandchildren to take care of. They do
13 not qualify for any assistance, none, for housing,
14 because market rate is not low-income, plus they
15 wouldn't qualify for it.

16 You have grandparents that have four, five,
17 six kids in a household that's taking care of these
18 children. There is nobody else to do it. That's
19 quite a strain that goes on your light bill. Plus
20 you are talking about in one year, that rent goes
21 up. Those children still have to eat, and if you
22 are a grandparent -- and I know you are -- you want
23 the best for your grandchildren. So of course,
24 they are going to get the proper schools, which
25 cost money. You are going to have to use gas to

1 take them back and forth, and you want to include
2 them in activities. And this is all around the
3 state of Florida. Not just me. And please don't
4 think because of color, because sometimes we lock
5 that in, that that means all races have this
6 problem. And how in the world do you expect their
7 car notes -- like I said, the rent goes up, you are
8 already talking about market rate, how the rent is
9 going up on people. And of course, like I say,
10 just think about the groceries. And you got the
11 little people who like to play with the toilet
12 tissue and the paper towels, and you run out, so
13 you bought a case, you are still in trouble. Milk
14 costs -- how much is a gallon of milk?

15 You are really ripping these people off. It's
16 hard for them. Then you are talking about a \$300
17 or \$400 light bill. This was something that they
18 have to go through. It's really hard. And if you
19 to think about -- and I know you thought about
20 this, but I got my grandchildren stay with me, and
21 this is not because I volunteer a lot of --
22 (INAUDIBLE) -- habits and you have to take your
23 grandchildren, even if you took the teenagers, you
24 are still taking them and you want to be involved.

25 Nobody mentions that. Nobody thinks about it,

1 but those people are suffering. They don't qualify
2 for anything. You get five children and you have
3 to take them in a two-bedroom apartment. That's
4 another real whole adjustment, meaning the light
5 bill is still going up, the rent, they have no clue
6 what it's going to be that year. Plus you got
7 these little people that you are making sure are
8 getting activities, day nursery really costs. You
9 know, that's one of the problems we are talking
10 about now, not to mention the health problems that
11 they don't qualify for any of the clinics or any of
12 the other places. This comes out of the
13 grandparents' fixed income.

14 And as you know, fixed income only come once a
15 year, and it's not enough to support yourself and
16 these children. And they are left out. And this
17 all this is all over the state of Florida. In
18 fact, it's all over the United States the things
19 that we are talking about, the energy in the state
20 of Florida.

21 And as you were saying soul, and cold-hearted,
22 you know, if you make a certain amount of money, it
23 doesn't matter, you know. You can go to all the
24 concerts, and you want your children to be exposed
25 any of this, and I don't know mean concerts, just

1 -- not just concerts, because I know you are
2 thinking about hard rock and all of that. I am
3 talking about things that you might want to go to
4 the Straz Center. You might want to take them to
5 the museum. That costs, because you are trying to
6 create them, and you are trying to make sure they
7 are educated. And those are the parts of the
8 parents having to do that, so you have the
9 grandparents, then you have to do that. And that
10 is very costly.

11 So to go up on rent and lights, not to mention
12 you might have not paid your car off, you still got
13 to do that. And if you have any other bills, the
14 man with your student loans, that's really
15 something. And you know how they do with the
16 student loans if you don't pay, you have the
17 interest rate and all of that. Not to mention if
18 the parents have any other loans.

19 So you have these little people, you have
20 grandparents that's having a time, and especially
21 the single mothers and I fall under single mothers,
22 and not to -- (INAUDIBLE) -- mothers who have six,
23 and all six of my grandchildren.

24 The first one I got at age three and had to
25 revamp. And you revamp your life when you do this.

1 It's not that it goes the same. It's a whole
2 revamp. I thought, sure, hey, 40 years old, I am
3 free, but that wasn't true. His mother got him
4 back. Then just as I retired, started another job,
5 I wound up with the other five. Now my life
6 changed again.

7 That means your light bill staying in market
8 rate, no low-income, market rate housing, that
9 means your rent is going up, you have to revamp
10 your entire life. Your money is limited. You are
11 buying food that you had not -- you want to please
12 them, so you buy something you don't want them to
13 have, just for fun, or you are taking them places
14 -- (INAUDIBLE) -- and to go up on the light bill,
15 you know, it's really something, you are taking a
16 lot from them, plus from the children.

17 Now of course, you want them to have
18 everything. The day nursery, as I said, and the
19 children, the things you want to expose them, not
20 to mention gas, taking them back and forth to the
21 things that you want them to do. If they are
22 attending church, then there is the activities for
23 the church. So you don't go on Sunday. You go
24 every other day, they are going to have activities.
25 If there is something at that the Boys & Girls

1 Club, that means you got to take them. You want
2 them to go because you want them to be exposed.

3 So these are the things that really affect
4 everybody, and again, the state of Florida, it's
5 really, really something. You are not thinking
6 about those people because they don't qualify for a
7 lot of things, but they are out there suffering,
8 and they are having to make do. And I think you
9 should really, really consist and think about that.
10 Again, your salaries is much higher than ours and,
11 you know, some of the things I thought DeSantis
12 should have taken the money and put in some of the
13 State workers who retired than some of the things
14 he's done.

15 But again, think about these people. They
16 don't qualify for anything, but they do have to
17 take care of these children, and they don't want to
18 see them in the streets or any place else. So you
19 really, really need to consider that that's another
20 set of people that just low-income, not low-income,
21 those people in the middle that don't qualify for
22 any assistance, and they are trying to make do.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 (Applause from the audience.)

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: I will just ask again, is
3 there anyone else in the room that has not had a
4 chance to speak? Anyone else in the room has not
5 had a chance? I don't -- I don't see anybody.

6 Parties, any other closing items?

7 Commissioners, anything?

8 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Exhibit.

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: I think we did move it in,
10 though.

11 MR. MARQUEZ: You did.

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: So we are good on that.

13 Just, you know, a quick thank you to -- to all
14 those that came out today. I know it was a little
15 bit of a long meeting, but certainly it's important
16 for us to hear everyone's comments and testimony.

17 Just as a reminder, the hearing will
18 technically be in person in August, so that's when,
19 of course, we will deliberate through things and
20 will be together again to discuss this. So, again,
21 thank you all for -- for your participation today.

22 If there is no further business before us, I
23 believe that we are adjourned. Thank you.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

25 (Applause from the audience.)

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(Proceedings concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

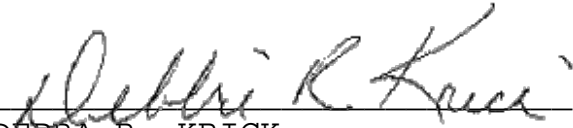
STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, DEBRA KRICK, Court Reporter, do hereby
certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the
time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I
stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the
same has been transcribed under my direct supervision;
and that this transcript constitutes a true
transcription of my notes of said proceedings.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,
employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
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attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I
financially interested in the action.

DATED this 10th day of July, 2024.


DEBRA R. KRICK
NOTARY PUBLIC
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EXPIRES AUGUST 13, 2024