

09/24/24 - Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation d/b/a
National Grid - 24-E-0322, 24-G-0323

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STATE OF NEW YORK

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

CASE 24-E-0322; 24-G-0323 - In the Matter of Niagara
Mohawk Power Corporation d/b/a National Grid for
Electric Service and Niagara Mohawk Power
Corporation, d/b/a National Grid for Gas Service

PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

LOCATION: Buffalo Public Library
1 Lafayette Square
Buffalo, New York 14203

BEFORE: A.L.J. TARA KERSEY
A.L.J. DAKIN LECAKES

Reported by Thomas Baker

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1 (The hearing commenced at 4:11 p.m.)

2 A.L.J. LECAKES: Let's go on the
3 record. I call case 24-E-0322. This is the
4 proceeding on motion of the Commission as the rates,
5 charges, rules, and regulations of Niagara Mohawk
6 Power Corporation, doing business as National Grid
7 for Electric Service, and its companion case
8 24-G-0323, proceeding on motion of the Commission as
9 the rates, charges, rules, and regulations of Niagara
10 Mohawk Power Corporation doing business as National
11 Grid for Gas Service. Good afternoon, everyone, and
12 welcome.

13 We are here today for a public
14 statement hearing that was noticed on August 26th,
15 2024. This public statement hearing concerns the
16 proposed changes in the electric and gas delivery
17 rates and practices of National Grid. National Grid
18 filed amendments to its electric and gas tariff
19 schedules on May 28th, 2024, proposing to increase
20 its annual electric and gas delivery revenues
21 effective April -- April 1st, 2025.

22 More specifically, National Grid seeks
23 to increase its electric delivery revenues by
24 approximately \$525 million, which would be an 11
25 percent increase in total electric revenues, and its

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1 natural gas delivery revenues by approximately \$148
2 million, a 15 percent increase in total gas revenues.
3 These increases would result in total monthly bill
4 increases for the average residential customer of
5 approximately \$18.92, or 15 percent, for electric
6 customers, and \$18.34 for natural gas customers.

7 The rate request filing states that
8 the company is focused on three priorities. Number
9 one, continuing to deliver safe, reliable energy
10 service to its more than two million customers;
11 number two, enabling customers to affordably meet
12 their energy needs while improving the company's
13 customer service; and number three, supporting the
14 goals of the Climate Leadership and Community
15 Protection Act.

16 I am Dakin Lecakes, the chief
17 administrative law judge for the New York State
18 Public Service Commission, based here in our Buffalo
19 office. With me today is Judge Tara Kersey. Judge
20 Kersey and I are here this afternoon to hear your
21 comments for the record on behalf of the New York
22 State Public Service Commission. Judges Tony Belsito
23 and Mike Clarke in our Albany office are responsible
24 for the legal proceedings for these cases.

25 At the conclusion of the legal

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1 process, those judges will make recommendations to
2 the Commission, the ultimate decision maker in this
3 case. The Commission, in making its decision, must
4 consider the utility's proposal and may approve or
5 deny the request, or it can modify those requests.
6 The Public Service Commission has seven members: The
7 chairperson, Rory Christian, and six other
8 commissioners, James Alesi, David Valesky, John
9 Maggiore, Uchenna Bright, Denise Sheehan, and Radina
10 Valova.

11 Today, we are here to listen to your
12 thoughts on the company's rate filings. Any
13 statements you make today will become part of the
14 case record. We have a court reporter here who will
15 prepare a transcript of the hearing, which will be
16 available to the commissioners for their
17 consideration. When completed, the transcript will
18 also be available for review by the public on the
19 Department of Public Service website.

20 Today's hearing is not a question and
21 answer session, but it is to hear comments from you.
22 However, if you do have any questions,
23 representatives of National Grid are here at the
24 front to discuss with you any questions that you have
25 about your rates or your utility service, including

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1 your account or billing.

2 Please note that you can also provide
3 comments even if you do not want to speak today. You
4 can submit comments on the Department's website, by
5 regular mail, or by phone. The details for these and
6 other ways to comment are listed in the public notice
7 for today's event and are available from our Office
8 of Consumer Services representatives at the entrance
9 table. Regardless of how any comments are submitted
10 in this proceeding, they will be given equal
11 consideration. Comments can be submitted throughout
12 the entirety of the proceeding and will be considered
13 whenever they are submitted.

14 For people that want to make a
15 statement here today, please fill out a registration
16 card if you have not already done so which is also
17 available at the entrance table from our consumer
18 outreach staff. I will call the speakers up one by
19 one using those cards. Please speak slowly and
20 clearly so that the court reporter can accurately
21 capture your statement for the record. To the extent
22 that you may have a lengthy written statement, you
23 can summarize that statement here and submit the full
24 written statement either by email or mail.

25 Please be respectful to today's

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1 speakers. We recognize that there may be differing
2 viewpoints, but this event is being held so that we
3 can hear from everyone and would like to provide
4 comments and -- or make a statement on the record.
5 Please do not interrupt the speakers or these
6 proceedings and make sure to silence your cell phones
7 now.

8 With that in mind, we're going to
9 start with our first speaker, Josh Veronica.

10 MR. VERONICA: Good afternoon. My
11 name is Josh Veronica. I serve as director of
12 government affairs at the Buffalo Niagara
13 Partnership, which is our regional chamber of
14 commerce. We represent over 1,000 businesses,
15 nonprofits, and higher educational institutions in
16 the region who collectively employ over a quarter
17 million people.

18 In the wake of the 2019 Climate
19 Leadership and Community Protection Act and the
20 ensuing Climate Action Plan, New York State's need
21 for electricity is greater than ever. State plans
22 call for significant reductions in the use of fossil
23 fuels to power homes, businesses, and vehicles.

24 The State's plans for decarbonization
25 will not be costless. They will require dramatic

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1 increase in the amount of electricity available,
2 which in turn requires a significant expansion of
3 electric transmission infrastructure. Under State
4 plans, the way New York will produce electricity is
5 change -- is changing -- is already changing, which
6 also necessitates heightened transmission investment.

7 To meet New York's climate goals,
8 population centers will rely on rurally located wind
9 turbines and solar farms to deliver power, requiring
10 construction of many more miles of transmission
11 infrastructure and upgrading existing infrastructure.
12 Additionally, more frequent cases of extreme weather
13 require further grid maintenance and resilience
14 upgrades to preserve energy reliability, which is a
15 top concern for our membership.

16 All these grid upgrades require
17 substantial investment from utility providers like
18 National Grid. The BNP commends National Grid for
19 its efforts to power our region cleanly and to
20 identify needed investments. National Grid is also
21 working to reduce demand for electricity by providing
22 incentives for energy efficiency upgrades for
23 commercial and industrial customers.

24 However, despite these cost-saving
25 efforts, major grid investment will still be needed

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1 to comply with the State's climate goals and
2 mandates. So absent investment from the public
3 sector, National Grid must recover these costs
4 through their rates. The BNP supports National
5 Grid's efforts to ensure we can reliably power our
6 regional economy into next generation. Thank you.

7 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.
8 Our next speaker is John Johnson.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon. My name
10 is John Johnson. I'm with New York Bus Sales, the
11 Blue Bird and Micro Bird school bus dealer in New
12 York State. In 2023, we constructed a six million,
13 20,000 square foot facility in Batavia, New York.
14 That was intended to support the school bus operators
15 in Western New York as they converted their -- their
16 diesel fleets to electric fleets as required by the
17 Climate Leadership Community Protection Act, as well
18 as the fact that -- with the -- Governor Hochul's
19 mandate to no longer sell diesel school buses after
20 2027.

21 National Grid assisted in the
22 installation and charging stations and technology as
23 part of their Electric Vehicle Make Ready Program.
24 We appreciate their partnership on this project as
25 our company plans to play a major role in the

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1 transition of school bus fleets to all electric in
2 New York State. Thank you.

3 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

4 Our next speaker is Kurt Korm (sic)?

5 MR. KOJM: Kojm.

6 A.L.J. LECAKES: Kojm. Please spell
7 your name when you come up for --

8 MR. KOJM: K-O-J-M.

9 A.L.J. LECAKES: -- at the microphone.

10 MR. KOJM: Okay.

11 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you so much.

12 MR. KOJM: You got it. It's

13 K-O-J-M --

14 A.L.J. LECAKES: Okay.

15 MR. KOJM: -- as in Mary.

16 A.L.J. LECAKES: You may proceed.

17 MR. KOJM: Okay. My name is Kurt
18 Kojm. I'm a volunteer advocate with AARP New York,
19 and I'm a ratepayer in the National Grid service
20 territory. I've been a ratepayer for over
21 forty-three years. Thank you for the opportunity to
22 speak today concerning National Grid's utility rate
23 increase.

24 AARP opposes the National Grid rate
25 increase and urges the PSC to reject this increase.

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1 National Grid is proposing yet another increase five
2 times greater than inflation for its Upstate New York
3 service territories. The company rate increase
4 requests of \$525 million for electric and 148 million
5 for gas delivery services are unacceptable and should
6 be dramatically reduced by the PSC.

7 If approved, the Public Service
8 Commission -- this would result in monthly delivery
9 bill increases on the average residential customer of
10 approximately \$18.92 for electric, and \$18.34 for
11 gas. This is excessive and unacceptable. AARP New
12 York strongly recommends that PSC takes into
13 consideration that many of National Grid customers
14 cannot afford their bills right now. National Grid's
15 bills haven't been affordable for low- and
16 moderate-income customers, and this increase will
17 just make it worse.

18 Right now, there's over 236,000
19 households -- that's a lot of people -- 236
20 households -- 236,000 households who are sixty days
21 or more late on their bill to National Grid. And
22 with 46,351 households receiving a final termination
23 notice in July, which is the latest -- latest data,
24 according to their website. These improve -- these
25 proposed increases would undoubtedly aid to the

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1 financial burden of hundreds of thousands of older
2 New Yorkers living on fixed incomes who are already
3 struggling to pay their monthly utility bills and
4 other daily living expenses.

5 AARP believes that certain actions by
6 the Public Service Commission should be taken in this
7 rate case. Number one, the customer charges should
8 not be increased. They are already too high. High
9 customer changes make controlling your energy bill
10 more difficult.

11 Number two, the return on investment
12 requested is 10.5 percent -- far exceeds what
13 utilities around the country are getting and should
14 be reduced.

15 And number three, specifically
16 requiring the utilities apply and maximize all
17 federal dollars available to alleviate cost to
18 existing ratepayers.

19 To conclude my remarks, according to
20 National Grid in their filings with the PSC, a large
21 portion of their request increase is necessary to
22 prepare the groundwork for transition away from
23 fossil fuels and greater use of electricity. This is
24 consistent with the stated jurisdiction we've seen
25 for many recent utility rate increases, and the

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1 results of these requests in the past few years are
2 large (indiscernible) settlements that include
3 staggering, unaffordable utility rate increases for
4 taxpayers. The negotiated outcome of these cases are
5 not working for ratepayers, and the State approach
6 has to change.

7 While this is an issue that's beyond
8 the rate case exclusively, it's certainly a driver in
9 this case as New York moves towards a clean energy
10 future. It is imperative that we stop rubberstamping
11 the placement of enormous costs of New York's
12 transition into a clean energy future upon the backs
13 of utility rate taxpayer -- ratepayers, and develop a
14 more equitable strategy -- strategy to pay for its
15 transition.

16 So AARP New York believes that the
17 governor, the Public Service Commission, and the
18 legislature should work together more than ever to
19 make sure energy costs become affordable for all New
20 Yorkers. Thank you.

21 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

22 Our next speaker is Thomas Miller.

23 MR. MILLER: Hello. Good afternoon.

24 I'm Thomas Miller, director of products and programs
25 at Good Carbon Co. Good Carbon Co. is a local,

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1 net-zero, affordable housing developer here in -- in
2 the area. We're focused on the conversion of old,
3 inefficient buildings to very efficient net zero
4 carbon properties. We start with a reduction-first
5 approach that involves air sealing, dense insulation,
6 high-performance windows, roofing, et cetera. We
7 then replace the existing gas system with electrified
8 geothermal heat pumps and electric appliances. We
9 also put L-2 EV chargers in every parking spot
10 possible in addition. We also integrate onsite,
11 offsite solar, battery storage control systems, and
12 more to provide production and smart management.

13 The result is a 70 percent energy
14 reduction for getting building and ten metric tons of
15 carbon offset per unit, which creates truly
16 sustainable living for our community. Currently, we
17 have 1,000 dwelling units, either retrofitted or in
18 process, another 2,500 over the next twenty-four
19 months, and we plan to scale with 5,000 units in
20 three years and 10,000 within seven years.

21 Our goal is to beat these productions
22 and electrify as many properties as possible, while
23 utilizing the capacity, and transfer the existing
24 wire set on the street and offer a (indiscernible)
25 approach to decarbonization of the community and

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1 economy. As a result, we are heavy, heavy utilizers
2 among the different programs National Grid has to
3 offer.

4 First, EV Make Ready. The -- the Make
5 Ready team has been a pleasure to work with. They
6 have been extremely flexible in our development
7 constraints and have been flexible in the program
8 implementation, while staying within the constraints
9 of the regulations and have been a big part of our
10 growth and success as a development company. The
11 team support with our partnership with the NY Green
12 Bank and other key partners in financial support has
13 been pivotal to our impact.

14 Currently, we have over 400 EV ports
15 in -- in process over ten projects, one of those
16 being one of the largest EV fields in the state at
17 over 100 chargers. We will do over 1,000 more
18 chargers in the next twelve to twenty-four months
19 just with our current pipeline alone.

20 Next is New York Clean Heat. The New
21 York Clean Heat Program is a key incentive that
22 allows us to electrify the old buildings. The
23 problem -- the program has been durable and
24 consistent. We hope to see it continue to be a
25 complementary source of needed capital to different,

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1 necessary programs to retrofit old buildings
2 inventory in the Western New York market. The
3 program managers have been good to work with and --
4 and are development friendly. The group has been
5 open to working with us on different sticking points
6 and have navigated the program well to help support
7 our different needs.

8 Currently, that's around almost over
9 500 heat pumps, both geo, ground-sourced heat pumps
10 and also air-sourced heat pumps installed to follow
11 our previously mentioned unit conversion projects.

12 Next is the grid services and energy
13 transition solutions. This is also known as the
14 Battery to Grid Program as well. This is a new
15 program within National Grid that we are exploring --
16 a pilot program and partnership and is our most
17 recent endeavor. We have found the National Grid
18 team to be receptive and creative when it comes to
19 working with the new battery and grid
20 interoperability services.

21 We're looking to -- looking forward to
22 working with the team to bring new energy products to
23 affordable multifamily space. This partnership help
24 grows -- group -- both group -- helps both groups
25 navigate current and future constraints with ease.

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1 We are excited about the potential of having local
2 battery storage to utilize existing grid
3 infrastructure.

4 Lastly, I just want to mention all the
5 service, customer connections, engineering and design
6 teams as well. As mentioned, through the -- the
7 breadth of our work, we -- we interact with these
8 teams daily at all levels of our organization. These
9 teams are critical to ensuring the -- the project
10 success and alignment through every step of the way.
11 We find them to be responsive and available to meet
12 onsite with our design engineering electro teams just
13 to ensure an optimal design. Well, the job owners
14 ensure sure strong communication across both groups
15 with municipalities -- and with municipalities so the
16 expectations and timings are clear. Their support is
17 the foundation for our project's success.

18 Overall, we have and will continue to
19 be a strong consumer and partner with these programs.
20 The ability to keep them fully resourced is critical
21 to our ability to execute and take on new projects.
22 This allows us to provide truly sustainable living at
23 an affordable rate in -- in this local market. We
24 look forward to the opportunity to improve these
25 programs and their outputs while being a leading

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1 steward of their goals and structure. Thank you.

2 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you.

3 Next we have Thomas Allen Kucharski.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Tom Kucharski, and I am president and CEO of
6 Invest Buffalo Niagara. We represent the eight
7 counties of Western New York and are the region's
8 nonprofit, privately-funded economic development
9 organization focused on job creation by attracting
10 new employers to the Buffalo Niagara region.

11 Our organization works closely with
12 National Grid to help attract new investment to
13 Western New York. In today's economic development
14 environment, the availability of electric capacity to
15 serve projects with ever increasing electric demands
16 is becoming critical to landing new future capital
17 investment. Having significant available electrical
18 capacity on both the transmission and distribution
19 systems gives Western New York an opportunity to
20 capture expansions of existing companies and new
21 companies looking to locate in our region. This is
22 especially critical as our region fields onshoring
23 and high-tech manufacturing interests in the nano and
24 semiconductor space given our federal designation as
25 a regional tech hub.

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1 Invest Buffalo Niagara supports
2 National Grid's proposal in their rate filing to
3 continue their investment plan by rebuilding their
4 electric transmission and distribution
5 infrastructure. National Grid's economic development
6 programs support our mission to market Western New
7 York throughout the world as a strategic place to
8 locate a business. National Grid's programs also
9 help provide direct financial assistance to prospects
10 looking to locate in our region. Their grants make
11 projects more economically feasible and assist with
12 electrical infrastructure and brownfield cleanup
13 costs.

14 Invest -- Invest Buffalo Niagara
15 supports the continuation of National Grid's current
16 economic development programs under this proposed
17 rate filing. Thank you.

18 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you.

19 Next, I have Bruce Boissonnault.

20 MR. BOISSONNAULT: Thank you very
21 much. By the way, thank you both for doing this.
22 It's a thankless job, and I -- and I know that. And
23 I also know without my glasses, this won't work.

24 I just want to reiterate what Kurt
25 said and then add a -- add a point. Customer charges

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1 should not be increased. They are higher than they
2 should be. The return on investment of 10.5 percent
3 is -- is above the curve. And specifically, the
4 utility should be required to apply and maximize all
5 the federal dollars available to alleviate the costs.
6 On that point, AARP is certainly able to provide some
7 background if -- if that is helpful, and some detail.

8 The only other thing I wanted to say
9 is these are regulated monopolies. And they're
10 regulated for a reason, because human nature leads us
11 to unintended consequences. And so I really urge you
12 to -- to regulate, to not rubberstamp this. This is
13 a big increase. That's it.

14 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you.

15 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

16 A.L.J. LECAKES: Next, I have Dominic
17 Costanzo.

18 MR. COSTANZO: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Dominic Costanzo, vice president of portfolio
20 at 43North. We're an accelerator program that
21 invests \$5 million annually to attract and retain
22 high-growth companies here in Buffalo, New York. Our
23 mission is simple: to support the highest potential
24 companies early in their journey, so that subsequent
25 job growth happens locally and positively impacts the

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1 region's economy longer term.

2 In a few weeks, we'll actually be
3 holding our 10th annual finals event, where sixteen
4 companies will make their pitch to secure funding
5 from our organization in one of five slots in our
6 yearlong program. Over the past ten years, we've
7 invested in sixty-nine companies. We've collectively
8 raised near -- nearly \$1 billion in funding and have
9 created over 2,000 jobs globally, and over 1,000 here
10 locally in Buffalo, New York.

11 We prioritize diversity in our
12 selection process and take pride in the fact that 49
13 percent of our founders are from underrepresented
14 groups, 26 percent of which are female led. National
15 Grid has been a partner with 43North since our first
16 year in 2014, and has been a key supporter in every
17 year since, with their investment helping us carry
18 out our mission of growing the region's economy in
19 Western New York.

20 National Grid's economic development
21 programs have helped us recruit new, innovative
22 businesses to Buffalo and assisted in the development
23 of an entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem in
24 Upstate New York, stimulating and supporting
25 high-growth businesses in the National Grid service

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1 territory. Thank you.

2 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

3 Next, we have Marnie LaVigne.

4 MS. LAVIGNE: Good afternoon. I'm

5 Marnie LaVigne, president and CEO of Launch NY.

6 We're a private, nonprofit venture development

7 organization that supports high-growth potential

8 startups through both pro bono mentorship and access

9 to the most active seed fund in New York State.

10 So our core mission is to identify,

11 support, and actually fund companies that can have a

12 high impact in terms of both job and wealth creation

13 in our community. We are also catalyzing what will

14 be a sustainable entrepreneurial culture for Upstate

15 New York, and we do this through regional

16 collaboration ecosystem partners. That overarching

17 goal -- goal again is job and wealth creation.

18 So since our inception in 2012, we've

19 actually served, pro bono, over 1,700 companies,

20 which have gone on to raise nearly \$1.5 billion and

21 generate more than \$265 million in annual revenues,

22 while supporting nearly 5,300 jobs in our region. We

23 mentor over 350 startup businesses each year with our

24 free coaching services and the financing programs.

25 So starting with that pro bono

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1 mentorship, we do that through dozens of
2 entrepreneurs and residents that bring the kind of
3 expertise that will keep those businesses here and
4 prevent good ideas from dying on the vine. Plus, we
5 actually provide more intensive support services for
6 our underrepresented founders through a program
7 called Founders Go Big.

8 In addition, we have an emerging clean
9 tech opportunity incubator that serves clean energy
10 and climate tech companies. And in fact, due to our
11 status and stature and leadership in this space, we
12 actually are on the governance committee for the new
13 federally designated battery storage engine and tech
14 hub that has certainly been in the press and built up
15 over the past several months here in Upstate New
16 York.

17 We've been really fortunate that
18 National Grid has stepped up and supported Launch NY
19 for several years. The grants through, specifically,
20 their National Grid CleanTech Incubation Program,
21 have helped us not only establish, but also expand
22 our support services in order to grow the economy in
23 our region. This, very specifically, is creating an
24 entrepreneurial ecosystem that is sustainable, and
25 it's one that will really impact the National Grid

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1 Upstate New York service territory as a whole.

2 As a (indiscernible) of National
3 Grid's funding for, now, several years, I'm
4 especially pleased to share that we have helped spawn
5 the new green economy in Western New York, with over
6 160 clean energy companies in our portfolio. These
7 companies are directly supporting and aligning
8 themselves with the goals of the -- the Climate
9 Leadership and Community Protection Act. Plus, we're
10 engaging the entire community in this initiative with
11 over 50 percent of our portfolio led by
12 underrepresented founders, and over 70 percent of
13 those companies being located in low-income census
14 tracts or neighborhoods.

15 National Grid's role absolutely is
16 crucial in continuing to fuel an inclusive innovation
17 permanent economy in our region. Thank you.

18 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

19 Our next speaker is Laurie Wheelock.

20 MS. WHEELLOCK: Good evening. Thank
21 you, Administrative Law Judges Kersey and Lecakes for
22 being here tonight. My name is Laurie Wheelock, and
23 I am the executive director and counsel of the Public
24 Utility Law Project. We go by PULP for short.

25 Our organization is a party in the

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1 rate case, and we will be filing testimony on
2 Thursday. But I would say with all the rate case
3 work we do, with all the policy cases we do, our
4 direct services is where we make the most impact in
5 New York State. And we work with low-income
6 customers every single day. They call us. We
7 provide no-cost assistance. We take a look at their
8 bills. We help explain what's going on with their
9 usage. We direct them to financial assistance
10 programs, including the Energy Affordability Program
11 and HEAP, which opens November 1st. And we try to
12 help set them up so they can afford what's coming
13 next.

14 Every single day, my team works with
15 National Grid's consumer advocates, and we've had
16 some very hard cases. How do I afford my rent? What
17 am I going to do when my loved one passes away? Even
18 active domestic violence situations, and we've had
19 amazing results. We've been able to help set people
20 up and get them ready for the winter. But this rate
21 case? It's not personal; it's business. And PULP is
22 very concerned about the affordability considerations
23 and thinks that the State needs to take a very
24 serious look and dive deep into what's going on with
25 every regulated utility when they come forward for a

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1 rate increase.

2 So National Grid is asking for
3 approximately \$19 more a month on the electric side,
4 and we are very concerned that their customers can't
5 afford that. According to their own collections
6 activity reports, which AARP cited earlier, not only
7 were there 228,000 customers behind on their bills by
8 sixty days or more in August, but over 10,000
9 accounts were terminated for nonpayment during that
10 same time.

11 PULP has been going to each of the
12 in-person public statement hearings and providing
13 poverty data so that each region has that in the
14 record, and for Buffalo, the numbers are really
15 staggering. In 2021, 56 percent of Buffalo's total
16 households were living in poverty or at the ALICE
17 threshold, which is the assist -- asset limited,
18 income constrained, employed household level. In
19 2022, children in Buffalo -- there were 39.8 percent
20 of them that were living in poverty. Buffalo's deep
21 poverty rate is the second highest in the state at
22 20.7 percent, which is a comparison to similar large
23 cities throughout New York State.

24 Everyday ratepayers are always
25 struggling, and we honestly know it's not just

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1 low-income. We have small businesses, we have
2 moderate -- we have higher income individuals who are
3 also reaching out to us for help. And so we need to
4 dig deep. We need to think creatively. And so PULP
5 will be doing that in the rate case. We'll be
6 looking at the level of arrears in comparison to the
7 rate of terminations. We'll be seeing how many
8 HEFPA-compliant deferred payment agreements are being
9 offered and what the enrollment into the EAP program
10 is looking.

11 We'll also be seeing how many accounts
12 are being coded for elderly, blind, and disabled, and
13 looking into protective procedures there as well.
14 Anything we can do to enhance and make sure that
15 those consumer protections are strong and being
16 utilized.

17 But back to creativity. We have to
18 roll up our sleeves and we have to have serious
19 conversations about rate reform, fixed charges, how
20 the ROE is set, and also whether or not the companies
21 are applying for federal funds and if successful,
22 using those to properly offset the cost to
23 ratepayers, because ratepayers can't share the burden
24 alone.

25 National Grid customers are being

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1 asked to do more with less. And again, we need New
2 York State to do more to help them. PULP looks
3 forward to being a party in the rate case. We look
4 forward to working with the company and the
5 Department, and we're ready to work hard. Thank you.

6 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

7 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.
8 Our next speaker is Benjamin Rand.

9 MR. RAND: Good afternoon, Judges.
10 Thank you. I'm here to speak in support of National
11 Grid and in particular the Manufacturing Productivity
12 Program that they offer under their economic
13 development side. Again, my name is Ben Rand. I'm
14 the president of Insyte Consulting. We're a private
15 nonprofit. We help small manufacturers become more
16 competitive and profitable, maximizing their
17 employment and their economic impact in our region.
18 We're the designated -- we're designated by Empire
19 State as the Western New York Manufacturing Extension
20 Partnership Center, which is part of U.S. Department
21 of Commerce's Manufacturing Extension Partnership
22 Program.

23 We also partner with National Grid and
24 administer their Manufacturing Productivity Program
25 grants. These are for manufacturing customers in

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1 Western New York. Our team of engineers work with
2 those manufacturers to make their companies more
3 efficient, helping them improve their processes,
4 reduce their costs, reduce waste, increase sales,
5 develop new products, and in general make our
6 manufacturing sector more competitive. Many of those
7 projects would not be possible without the assistance
8 that the Manufacturing Productivity Program provides
9 to those manufacturers.

10 The goal is to grow our critical local
11 manufacturing base, which is good for both local and
12 the state economy. By providing funding to enable
13 these program improvement opportunities, National
14 Grid's Manufacturing Productivity Program has had a
15 tremendous positive impact on manufacturers in
16 Western New York and, by extension, on our regional
17 economy. I'm not aware of any other private or
18 utility-based program anywhere else in the country
19 that's delivered such impressive results.

20 The U.S. Department of Commerce, as
21 part of the MEP program, surveys all of our clients
22 and has done so for twenty years using independent
23 third-party surveying companies. Based on these
24 independent surveys, Western New York manufacturers
25 funded by National Grid's MPP Program grants have

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1 reported cumulative impacts totaling over \$2 billion
2 since inception of the program, including 7,262
3 direct manufacturing jobs either created or saved as
4 a result of these projects. Based on over 3.9
5 million cumulative MPP grant value, this program
6 returns over \$500 for every \$1 invested by National
7 Grid, which is a tremendous ROI. From a jobs
8 perspective, the program has spent less than \$540 for
9 every job saved or created under this program. I'll
10 also submit the specific impact results in areas like
11 new sales, cost savings, et cetera.

12 As these figures clearly show,
13 National Grid's MPP Grant Program provides an immense
14 return on investment for manufacturers and for our
15 community as a whole. Insyte Consulting commends
16 National Grid for recognizing the importance of their
17 manufacturing clients to the local and state economy
18 and supports the continuation of this program as an
19 offering through the company's economic development
20 program. Thank you very much.

21 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you for your
22 comment.

23 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker is Brent Rollins.

25 MR. ROLLINS: Oh, that's me. I didn't

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1 really have anything to say. I just came to listen
2 and see what's going on. (Indiscernible).

3 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

4 MR. ROLLINS: All right now.

5 A.L.J. LECAKES: All right. Our next
6 speaker is Yolanda Wyatt.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay? That's
8 better.

9 A.L.J. LECAKES: Go ahead.

10 MS. WYATT: Hello. My name is Yolanda
11 Wyatt. I'm a long-time resident of Buffalo, New
12 York. Go Bills. I am a ratepayer here in the
13 Upstate New York area where National Grid intends to
14 enforce this outrageous increase. I'm a citizen
15 here. I'm a ratepayer, as I said, and I'm disabled.

16 I worked at Buffalo General for
17 twenty-eight years so I do know the importance of
18 having electricity. I've been on my own since I was
19 seventeen. I've been paying whenever I get billed.
20 Lately it's been kind of hard. This rate increase
21 will make it worse.

22 I am a volunteer of the AARP group,
23 and I strongly recommend that the PSC take into
24 consideration that people like myself, disabled,
25 elderly, on a fixed income -- we will encounter

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1 hardship with this rate increase. National Grid
2 sales have not been affordable for me, a low-income
3 citizen, and I have friends who are -- have a
4 moderate income, working, making almost 100,000 a
5 year and still cannot make ends meet in today's
6 economy. And this will be a hardship on them as
7 well.

8 Any increase will -- will be a
9 hardship for so many households here in our area.
10 Customers should not have to endure this struggle.
11 So I ask you to please not approve this. Thank you
12 for your time. Have a blessed day.

13 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

14 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

15 Our next speaker is Latrice Gray, I
16 believe. Anyone? It looks like L-A-T-R-I-C-E.

17 Our next speaker will be -- I think
18 it's Theresa Williams (ph.).

19 MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. How
20 are you?

21 A.L.J. KERSEY: Hi.

22 A.L.J. LECAKES: Hi. Do you need help
23 with that?

24 A.L.J. KERSEY: You can pull that down
25 right there.

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1 MS. WILLIAMS: You know, I didn't know
2 whether or not to touch it or not.

3 A.L.J. KERSEY: You're okay. Just
4 pull it down.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Just pull it down?

6 A.L.J. KERSEY: That's
7 (indiscernible).

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. All right.
9 I'll -- do you mind? Thank you.

10 Good afternoon. My name is Ms.
11 Theresa Williams, and I am a long-time resident of
12 Buffalo, New York. But I'm also a resident -- or was
13 a former resident of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. I'm not
14 here to challenge the logistics of National Grid.
15 I'm asking you to do that. I'm asking you to look at
16 their financial rubberstamping of increase.

17 I used to work for Arkansas Power and
18 Light as a journeyman electrician, which is now
19 Entergy Incorporated. Recently, I came across a case
20 involving National Grid Entity Services Incorporated,
21 my company in Arkansas, and Enron. And I've done a
22 lot of homework and a lot of due diligence and a lot
23 of footwork. And I found a case involving National
24 Grid and a \$6 million award that they were trying to
25 get from my company, Entergy Incorporated, and Enron.

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1 The judge denied that. But this was in Onondaga
2 County, which is not Erie County, but is going back
3 towards Syracuse.

4 The problem that I'm having here is
5 that I would like to know -- I'm not going to talk to
6 you about the electrical part, the grid, or anything
7 of that nature, or what I used to do, okay? I'm
8 having a problem with the finances, the
9 rubberstamping. How did they eliminate a \$6 million
10 loss on a long-term debt on their balance sheet?
11 We're talking about people losing their services or
12 not having services. How are they writing this off?
13 Who is their auditors?

14 I would like to write a letter, and
15 I've already started it -- started last night -- to
16 the secretary -- not to overlook the two of you, but
17 we have got to get to the bottom of a problem. They
18 just tore down the Huntley plant. Are we going to
19 pay for demolition on that? They had to tear that
20 down because they couldn't -- how do you say -- do
21 infrastructure improvements. They couldn't put
22 scrubbers inside the precipitator.

23 How do I know that? Because the
24 Sierra Club in Arkansas shut down the plant that I
25 used to work at, that I couldn't even breathe in.

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1 That's why I went on long-term disability, because of
2 sulfur dioxide. There's something more to this.

3 And at \$18 increase, let's get real.
4 Please. It's not -- how do you say -- creative
5 financing. It's called American greed, what NY did.
6 I wanted to go on record, not to put you all on the
7 hot seat, but to look at their financial
8 rubberstamping of writing things off on their balance
9 sheet. Whether it's long term -- how are you writing
10 it off, as an asset? Are you writing this off as
11 deadbeats?

12 My name is Theresa Williams. I live
13 in Buffalo, New York, and I used to work for Arkansas
14 Power and Light, which I now get my pension from --
15 Entergy Incorporated. And I want to say thank you.

16 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

17 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

18 Our next speaker is Stephen Tucker.

19 MR. TUCKER: Good afternoon. My name
20 is Stephen Tucker, and I'm the president and CEO of
21 Northland Workforce Training Center in the east side
22 of Buffalo.

23 As New York State's signature
24 workforce initiative, Northland Workforce Training
25 Center is an industry-driven public/private

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1 partnership between employers, educational
2 institutions, community and faith-based
3 organizations, and state and local government,
4 focused on closing the skills gap of the local labor
5 pool and creating economic (indiscernible) training,
6 co-ops, internships and apprenticeships, and
7 permanent employment for West New Yorkers seeking
8 careers in advanced manufacturing and clean energy.

9 National Grid has been a stark
10 supporter of Northland Workforce Training Center from
11 day one. They have utilized their economic
12 development programs, community giving, and their
13 foundation to support the rehabilitation of our
14 building, to support literacy training, help purchase
15 a van so we can transport students to and from
16 school, and recently provided funding to support
17 upgrades in our electric lab. They brought their
18 Grid for Good Program to Northland and engaged our
19 students on careers in advanced manufacturing and
20 clean energy. They also have hired several of our
21 students for permanent employment opportunities, as
22 well as provided several students with summer
23 internship opportunities.

24 Their support has helped us advance
25 our mission of providing a growing pool of skilled

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1 workers available for the manufacturing sector.

2 Their support has also been vital to encouraging
3 manufacturing firms to remain and grow here in West
4 New York. Thank you.

5 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

6 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

7 Our next speaker is Reverend Majadi
8 Baruti, I believe is how it's pronounced.

9 DR. BARUTI: (Indiscernible). Hey
10 there. Hi. How you guys been? Welcome back to
11 Buffalo.

12 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you.

13 DR. BARUTI: Unfortunate
14 circumstances, but welcome back nevertheless. I'm
15 Reverend Dr. Majadi Baruti. I'm the climate justice
16 organizer at the mighty PUSH Buffalo. And we are
17 currently dealing with now two great hikes, one from
18 National Fuel Gas and now from National Grid.

19 Not only am I a climate justice
20 organizer, I live inside of the City of Buffalo.
21 It's a beautiful space, beautiful people. And I am
22 considered to be middle class, which is nebulous as
23 hell. It is useless to say that because it still
24 feels like I'm in poverty based on the bills that I
25 have to pay. This National Fuel Gas rate hike is

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1 absurd. And now I'm suggesting that this rate hike
2 by National Grid is equally absurd, because these are
3 happening simultaneously, right? We already deal
4 with the City, whose populace is in poverty, whose
5 populace has been redlined and racialized, or what we
6 refer to as racial capitalism -- victims of racial
7 capitalism.

8 We live in an antiquated, old,
9 raggedy, beautifully designed, at the time it was
10 designed, housing. But I asked my fiancé, who is a
11 woman who is living with a disability, to go through
12 the house and look at the spaces in which air would
13 be leaking, and there were numerous ones, and our
14 landlord is not going to get them fixed because, you
15 know, why would you have to, right? We're just a
16 bunch of African Americans.

17 So with her disabilities, with the
18 already high rent, along with a rate hike from two
19 energy companies that we actually have to have
20 because we have medicines that we need to keep
21 refrigerated, this type of thing, we're dealing with
22 a lot. And I'm middle class -- again, a useless
23 term. What about my beloveds in the east side and
24 the west side -- lower west side of the city, who are
25 living in abject poverty?

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1 I was here at this library last year
2 doing some work (indiscernible) for -- to fight
3 National Fuel Gas rate hike and some other things.
4 And I spoke to three different people who were
5 homeless because the homeless will engage the library
6 for safety. They were homeless because of the gas
7 bill, because of the energy bill. So what we're
8 looking at is the possibility of more people becoming
9 homeless, of more people having not only this
10 high-ass energy burden, but being on the streets just
11 out -- you can just walk right out here. You will
12 see them. They are my neighbors. They are my
13 beloved. As a man of the cloth, as a man who is
14 clergy, these are the folks that I give service to.

15 And at the same time, National Grid
16 now wants to file this request with our energy
17 regulators to raise the rates some \$19. And it seems
18 minuscule to some people, but it is not. It is not.
19 These increases are not sustainable. The housing
20 that we currently live in is not sustainable. 16
21 percent of National Grid customers are facing energy
22 debt burdens at an average of \$1,362. Many of us
23 don't have the \$62 in our bank accounts.

24 11,714 people -- I hate statistics.
25 11,714 people have had their services terminated in

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1 June of this year. So that means Mama Ella (ph.)
2 can't refrigerate her medicine. So I guess, the idea
3 is -- by these companies, both National Fuel and
4 National Grid, to hell with Mama Ella, so long as
5 their pockets are lined.

6 Speaking of the lining of pockets --
7 and I'm going to try to close it out here -- I am a
8 priest, and, you know, we have a tendency to go on
9 and on. National Grid CEO -- I got to find this
10 person's name -- National Grid CEO is being paid over
11 \$8 million a year. I can't even imagine \$8 million a
12 year in salary and bonuses. The shareholders are
13 using customers as a piggy bank.

14 The company has filed a request for
15 this 10 percent rate of return on their investments,
16 and these increases will be used to pay for what is
17 more than \$1.9 billion in upgrade to a gas system
18 that, as a climate justice organizer, I understand
19 clearly how natural gas is foolishness. It is death.
20 We are literally sitting in Western New York on a
21 bomb. I am not exaggerating. We are sitting under
22 metal tubes that have gas running through them.
23 Several places in this country -- or what my fiance
24 refers to as Total Island -- have exploded.

25 Last year -- or earlier this year,

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1 rather, in a city I lived in for three years,
2 Youngstown, Ohio, a young man died. You know what he
3 was doing when he died in this gas explosion? He was
4 going to the bank. The bank exploded. He died and
5 several people were injured. This gas structure,
6 this current energy system, is inefficient and it is
7 quite literally deadly. To pay for it is -- it's
8 like me paying someone to beat me to death, like we
9 do with the police.

10 We need to reject this rate hike, and
11 we need to do so with great and dire urgency. People
12 will become more homeless -- more people will become
13 homeless, and more people will perish.

14 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

15 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

16 Our next speaker is Clarke Gocker.

17 MR. GOCKER: Good afternoon. My name
18 is Clarke Gocker. I'm the senior director of
19 movement building with People United for Sustainable
20 Housing, or PUSH Buffalo. We are not parties to this
21 case yet, although we may become a party. We've been
22 a party in the past.

23 And yeah, I'm really just here to --
24 to speak on behalf of -- of our members. I'll, you
25 know, echo a lot of the sentiments of -- of Reverend

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1 Baruti, of Laurie Wheelock from PULP, our counterpart
2 at -- at AR -- AARP, in saying that the bills are too
3 damn high. And I think we need to consider that as a
4 kind of compounding factor. We need to look across
5 the full range of expenses that too many of our
6 low- and moderate-income households are confronted
7 with on a monthly basis.

8 Here in Buffalo, the community that we
9 call home on the west side of the city has seen some
10 of the largest real estate appreciation rates in
11 Western New York in the last five years. That's led
12 to pretty hefty tax reassessments that have really
13 hit people hard, 400 percent increases in property
14 tax bills on the -- in the last reassessment period.
15 A new reassessment process has opened in Buffalo, and
16 we're fearful that, again, a lot of those same
17 residents will be hit with increase to taxes, and if
18 they're renters, that, you know, landlords will pass
19 those costs on to renters.

20 Really, since COVID, Buffalo has had
21 one of the highest eviction rates in the state, I
22 think second only to the Bronx. And that persists.
23 And as the good reverend said, you know, any increase
24 in any bill can lead to eviction and homelessness.

25 And then National Fuel. You know,

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1 they're, right now, still petitioning for a -- a
2 30-percent increase in -- in delivery rate. So you
3 know, together, we think, you know, with the -- the
4 \$19 a month increase for the average customer that
5 National Grid's proposing that we'll further
6 sacrifice too many vulnerable residents in our
7 communities.

8 In 2019, we celebrated as a community.
9 We fought hard as an organization to win the Climate
10 Leadership and Community Protection Act and, in fact,
11 our communities were some of the architects of that
12 legislation. And when that legislation was imagined
13 and dreamt up, you know, in -- in meetings over, you
14 know, pizza and coffee on the west side of Buffalo
15 and across disadvantaged communities in the state, it
16 wasn't imagined that the transition would come on the
17 backs of our communities.

18 You know, we thought that we would be
19 leading that transition, and the transition would be
20 just and affordable for everyone. We don't think
21 that the transition should serve as an excuse for the
22 shareholders of companies like National Grid and
23 National Fuel to, you know, further profit off of the
24 climate crisis.

25 And I've heard a lot of gratitude

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1 expressed just in the few minutes that I've been here
2 towards National Grid's economic development
3 programs, which I'm sure are worthy. We've never
4 participated -- it -- in fact, I don't think we've
5 ever been invited to apply for, you know, any
6 economic development assistance from National Grid.
7 But I find it kind of perverse as public policy that
8 we would underwrite economic development policy by
9 handing out a -- a 10-percent rate of return -- or
10 return on equity to investors, you know, for that
11 economic development assistance, when we could be
12 making those, you know, direct payments from the
13 State budget and kind of circumventing, you know, any
14 kind of payment to a for-profit entity or their
15 shareholders.

16 So if folks in the room are, you know,
17 excited about economic development, there's better,
18 like, policy alternatives than, you know, paying
19 private investors a premium to deliver those economic
20 development benefits to -- to our neighborhoods. So
21 I hope the commission takes that under consideration.

22 And lastly, I just, you know, would --
23 would echo PULP in, you know, calling on the
24 Commission to -- to, you know, be open-minded and
25 creative and thinking about, you know, new rate

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1 structures, new rate design that can support the
2 transition to renewable heating and cooling
3 technologies in our homes. We know that the upfront
4 costs are -- are -- remain steep for -- for heat pump
5 technology. But the operating costs, you know, are
6 also steep.

7 And there's, you know, emerging data
8 from NYSERDA and other entities that is beginning
9 to -- to demonstrate that, which is good. But I
10 think what that's pointing to now are solutions that
11 are needed from this body to consider, you know,
12 new -- new rate structures that would allow low- and
13 moderate-income households to be some of the first to
14 experience the -- the benefits of -- of renewable
15 heating and cooling technologies.

16 You know, as -- you know, with the
17 climate crisis, extreme weather is upon us. We know
18 that, you know, in relation to -- to winter weather
19 and the blizzard that -- that, you know, killed many
20 of our residents here in Buffalo in 2022. But we
21 also know that extreme weather in Buffalo means
22 extreme heat. I think it's projected in the next
23 several decades Buffalo will experience its first
24 100-degree day. We'll begin to see, you know,
25 patterns of ninety-degree days, you know, pretty

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1 routinely.

2 And so heat pump technology, I think,
3 will become, you know, really life critical to many
4 of our residents, you know, elders, folks with
5 disabilities who need cooling in their homes to stay
6 safe. So yeah, I look forward to, you know,
7 remaining involved and engaged in this proceeding.
8 And just thank -- thank you for the opportunity.

9 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

10 Our next speaker is Richard Dread.

11 MR. DREAD: Yeah. Good evening. My
12 name is Richard Dread. I'm a resident of the east
13 side of Buffalo. And I come before you to share with
14 you a concern that I have. I'm concerned not only
15 about myself, but other people on the east side,
16 especially minorities who are adversely affected by
17 the rates -- the proposed raise in the cost of
18 keeping electricity in our homes. I'm a senior
19 person -- I'm 75 years of age. I'm now troubled with
20 arthritis and me risking getting my electric turned
21 off affects me as far as not being able to keep heat
22 in my house.

23 And being disabled to an extent -- I'm
24 also crippled with the -- the need for a CPAP
25 breathing machine because I have sleep apnea. And

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1 once you turn my -- because I can't pay a bill, being
2 a senior on the little bit of money I get from
3 retirement, it hurts me because every night I go to
4 sleep -- if I don't have my CPAP breathing machine
5 on, you know, I got to pray that I wake up the next
6 morning. And it's a scary thing to live that kind of
7 life.

8 I just want to share that with you.
9 Because it forces us people who live under those
10 kinds of constraints to find other ways to survive,
11 you know, and if -- we -- there are not too many
12 other ways you can do it. We -- we need the
13 electric -- the National Grid. We need National Fuel.

14 So I just want to let you know how
15 adversely affected not only the minorities, but
16 people in general -- when you raise your hike, we
17 can't pay it. I live on income that is, you know,
18 retirement. I just don't have the money. So please
19 don't let me suffer in pain. Thank you.

20 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you.

21 Our next speaker is Sam Iraci? Iraki
22 (ph.)?

23 MR. IRACI: Not many people pronounce
24 it correctly as you did. Thank you for the
25 opportunity. My name is Sam Iraci. I'm the

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1 executive director of Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps.

2 Since -- I've served in that role since October of
3 2012. BCAR is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit corporation
4 that serves as managing agent on behalf of the City
5 of Buffalo for all city-owned parking facilities. We
6 manage 1.8 million square feet of parking, containing
7 5,800 square -- of parking spaces serving downtown
8 residents, employees, visitors, and downtown
9 businesses. BCAR uses approximately 1.8 million
10 kilowatt hours of energy a year.

11 BCAR continues to enjoy an excellent
12 working relationship with National Grid. That
13 partnership has helped provide affordable, safe,
14 conveniently located downtown parking in public
15 space. Every National Grid manager that I personally
16 work with has been helpful, professional, and
17 effective in helping us achieve our goals.

18 For example, several years ago,
19 National Grid provided two thirds of the funding to
20 convert 8,200 fluorescent lighting fixtures to LED
21 lighting. That initiative helped BCAR reduce its
22 annual utility expense from \$387,688 in Fiscal Year
23 2014 to \$250,902 in Fiscal 2017, a 35 percent
24 reduction that helped BCAR and the City continue to
25 provide affordable parking rates.

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1 Recently, under the Make Ready
2 Program, working with the State of New York, National
3 Grid helped provide financing to install twenty-eight
4 new Level 2 EV charging stations, 9.6 kilowatts, and
5 in all of our city parking ramps, they provide public
6 parking for thirty-nine electric vehicle customers.
7 This initiative not only enabled BCAR to offer
8 improved customer services for those operating
9 electric vehicles, but services that were more energy
10 efficient for the entire Western New York community.
11 Thanks for the opportunity to speak here today.

12 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you.

13 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much.

14 I'm going to go back to the one
15 speaker that did not come forward. I believe the
16 name is Latrice. Latrice Gray?

17 Okay. That's all the speakers I have
18 that have signed up cards. I want to remind the
19 public at this point that you may continue to submit
20 public comments for these rate cases throughout the
21 entire proceeding by other means that were discussed
22 earlier, such as mail, email, and also providing
23 comments on the New York State Department of Public
24 Service website. If you need information about
25 accessing those addresses or ways to comment, you can

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1 get them from our Office of Consumer Outreach staff
2 at the table where you came in. It's also in the
3 public statement hearing notice that was issued for
4 today's hearing.

5 I'd like to thank everybody for your
6 comments and for your hosting of Judge Kersey and I
7 today. I'd like to thank our Office of Consumer
8 Services staff, the City of Buffalo, and the Public
9 Library for offering this space for our use today. I
10 would add this hearing is concluded, and we are off
11 the record.

12 (The hearing concluded at 5:11 p.m.)

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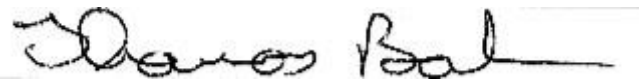
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STATE OF NEW YORK

I, THOMAS BAKER, do hereby certify that the foregoing was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place, as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of pages 1 through 50, is a true record of all proceedings had at the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name, this the 27th day of September, 2024.



THOMAS BAKER, Reporter