

1 10/18/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 COMMISSION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

4 CASE 23-E-0418 - Proceeding on motion of the
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
6 Regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
7 Corporation for electric service.

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9 CASE 23-G-0419 - Proceeding on motion of the
10 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
11 Regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
12 Corporation for gas service.

13
14 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

15 DATE: October 18, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

16 LOCATION: Restorative Justice & Community
17 Empowerment Center
18 733 Broadway
19 Kingston, New York 12401

20 BEFORE: ALJ ASHLEY MORENO

21 ALJ JAMES COSTELLO

22 CHAIR RORY CHRISTIAN

23 COMMISSIONER DAVID VALESKY

24 Reported by Monique Hines
25

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2 (The hearing commenced at 6:00 p.m.)

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Can we go on the
4 record? And just ask if you have cell phones on,
5 just please silence your cell phones. I call cases
6 23-E-0418 and 23-G-0419. Proceedings on motions of
7 the Commission for the rates, charges, rules and
8 regulations of Central Hudson -- Hudson Gas Electric
9 Corporation for electric and gas service.

10 Good afternoon -- good evening at this
11 point. We are here today for a public statement
12 hearing that was noticed by the Secretary on
13 September 26th, 2023. The public statement hearing
14 concerns proposed changes in the electric and gas
15 delivery rates and practices of Central Hudson Gas &
16 Electric Corporation, which I'm going to refer to
17 simply as Central Hudson from now on.

18 Central Hudson filed amendments to its
19 electric and gas tariff schedules on July 31st, 2023,
20 proposing to increase its annual electric and gas
21 delivery revenues, effective July 1st, 2024. They
22 proposed to increase its electric delivery revenues
23 by approximately \$139.5 million, which would be a
24 31.9 percent increase in base delivery revenues or a
25 16.4 percent increase in total revenues.

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2 And it proposes to increase its
3 natural gas delivery revenues by approximately \$41.5
4 million, which represents a 29.2 percent increase in
5 base delivery revenues or a 19 percent increase in
6 total revenues. The actual bill impacts of these
7 proposed changes on any particular customer class
8 will vary based on rate design and revenue
9 allocation.

10 My name is James Costello. I'm
11 Administrative Law Judge with the Department of
12 Public Service. And to my left is an Administrative
13 Law Judge Ashley Moreno who is also with the
14 Department of Public Service. Together we have been
15 assigned and are responsible for presiding over the
16 hearings that are going to be held in these cases.

17 And we also make -- make
18 recommendations to the Commission. And our job
19 basically is to make sure there's a full record for
20 the Commission -- Commission's review when they're
21 determining what the company's rates will be.

22 Under New York State law, the Public
23 Service Commission is the final decision maker in
24 this case and it must consider a utility's proposal.
25 It may adopt the proposal, reject the proposal in

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2 whole or in part, or it may modify. The Public
3 Service Commission will decide what Central Hudson's
4 terms and conditions of service will be.

5 And the Public Service Commission has
6 seven members, the Chairperson, Rory Christian, who's
7 seated to my immediate right. And six Commissioners
8 Diane Burman, James Alesi, Tracey Edwards, John
9 Howard, David Valesky, who seat -- seated to my far
10 right and John Maggiore.

11 And at this point, I'm going to ask
12 the Chair if he would like to make any comments.

13 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: Thank you, James.
14 Good evening, everyone. I want to first take a --
15 bless you -- want to take a moment to thank everyone
16 for coming out tonight. The presence of all of you
17 here show and reinforce how important this particular
18 rate case is, particularly given the continuity of
19 people coming into the room.

20 This is the fourth public hearing that
21 we've had on this matter. And we've had some online
22 hearings as well. And I want to reiterate what I've
23 said in those and others. We want to hear what you
24 have to say. I'm here tonight to listen. We want to
25 understand the concerns you've had. And we want to

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2 understand how this is going to affect you.

3 And I appreciate both you coming and
4 the opportunity to -- and the privilege to hear what
5 you have to say. So thank you all for coming out
6 tonight, and looking forward to the discussion.

7 COMMISSIONER VALESKY: Thank you very
8 much. I too, am very happy to be here this evening
9 with all of you and thank each and every one of you
10 for participating in this -- in this effort. I do also
11 want to just take a moment to thank Judge Costello and
12 Judge Moreno for agreeing to preside over this case.

13 We're very fortunate to have them in
14 that leadership capacity. And I would just want to
15 just amplify one thing that Judge Costello had
16 indicated. He talked about developing the public
17 record. And that is exactly what each and every one
18 of you are participating in here this evening.

19 And there will be other opportunities,
20 certainly in the future through other -- other
21 communication means. It's very, very important that
22 as -- we as Commissioners on the Public Service
23 Commission have a full and complete public record to
24 review. So as Chair Christian indicated earlier, the
25 attendance here this evening certainly is -- is very,

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2 very significant.

3 And we thank you for taking time out
4 of your busy day to be here. Thank you.

5 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you, Chair
6 Christian and Commissioner Valesky. What I'm going
7 to do now is explain the process that we're going to
8 follow this evening. So what we're going to do is
9 we're here to take comments from you. And this is an
10 opportunity for you to tell the Commission what your
11 thoughts are with respect to Central Hudson's rate
12 filings.

13 The statements you make today will
14 become part of the case record. We have a court
15 reporter with us today who will be making a
16 transcript of the hearing, which will be included in
17 the official case file so that your comments can be
18 considered by all members of the Commission.

19 When it is ready, the transcript will
20 be available for view on the Department of Public
21 Service's website. And as I stated earlier, before
22 the hearing began, we have a Spanish interpreter here
23 this evening. If anybody needs to or would like to
24 participate in this evening's matter by -- in
25 Spanish, they can take advantage of the Spanish

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2 interpreter.

3 We'd ask that you go to the back of
4 the room to get the equipment that that's needed.
5 And the Spanish interpreter will provide a real time
6 interpretation of -- of tonight's event. Okay. I'd
7 also like to let you know that this is not an
8 evidentiary type of a hearing. And it's not a
9 question and answer session.

10 It's basically a forum for you to
11 provide your comments to the Commission. And this is
12 not the only opportunity you have to provide
13 statements. If you don't want to speak tonight, and
14 you want to provide a statement in writing, you can
15 do that on the Commission's website, you can do that
16 through mail to the Commission.

17 You can also call the Commission,
18 there's a telephone number that was listed. And it's
19 listed in the notice that was provided for tonight's
20 event. And you can leave comments on that telephone
21 line. Regardless of how you leave comments or you
22 provide your comments to the Commission, they are
23 given equal consideration and equal weight.

24 And your comments will be accepted as
25 long as the case is pending before the Commission, up

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2 until the time it's decided. Your comments are taken
3 in and they are given consideration. If you do want
4 to make a statement today and you haven't already
5 done so, we'd ask that you fill out one of these
6 cards.

7 Provide your name so that we can call
8 you up and give you the opportunity to make your
9 statement. What I'm going to do is, I'm going to
10 call the speakers that we have one by one. And we're
11 going to ask that you go to the podium to give your
12 statement. You may have to adjust the microphone, so
13 that you can -- we can hear you. So that's one
14 thing.

15 And we ask that you make your
16 statements clearly, kind of don't go too quickly, if
17 you're reading so that the court reporter can get all
18 your statements down. To the extent that anyone has
19 any type of written -- lengthy written statement, we
20 ask that you would summarize that and that you
21 provide us with a written statement.

22 You can either give it to us up here
23 or you can provide it again by the other methods I
24 spoke about earlier. Given the number of people that
25 we have, we're -- we're not going to hold anyone to

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2 specific time limits, but we're going to ask that you
3 try to limit yourself to like four -- four minutes,
4 five minutes.

5 You certainly don't have to go that
6 long. But we -- we just want to make sure we are
7 able to reach everybody that signed up to speak.
8 Okay. And before we begin, I just want to remind
9 everyone that just please be respectful to all of the
10 speakers today. I don't anticipate that there's
11 going to be widely different views.

12 But if there -- if there are just give
13 -- give the people, you know, due respect, so
14 everybody's here, we're here to hear -- to give a
15 statement, we're here to hear everybody's views.
16 Okay. With that, I'm going to go to our first
17 speaker, who is Michelle Hinchey.

18 MS. HINCHEY: Hello and thank you and
19 thank you everyone for coming out tonight. I'm State
20 Senator Michelle Hinchey and as the representative of
21 residents in Dutchess, Green and Ulster counties, who
22 received their gas and electric service from Central
23 Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation, I submit this
24 testimony out of concern for my constituents and in
25 strong opposition to Central Hudson's proposed 16

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2 percent rate increase on residential electric bills
3 and 19 percent increase on gas -- gas bills for the
4 2024 fiscal year.

5 For more than two years, my office has
6 taken a leading role in advocating for Hudson Valley
7 residents, many of whom have been forced to endure
8 Central Hudson's unremitting, estimated billing
9 system malfunctions, alarming overcharging, incorrect
10 meter readings and a poor customer service practices.

11 Our advocacy collectively with other
12 local officials including County Executive Metzger,
13 who is here today, shed light on these egregious
14 errors and effectively initiated the P.S.C.'s
15 investigation into Central Hudson billing practices.

16 This investigation, which is still
17 ongoing, reaffirmed our calls in a December 2022
18 report from the P.S.C. which unequivocally stated
19 that the company's billing quote, problems were
20 indirectly or directly attributable to Central
21 Hudson's negligence, lack of appropriate training,
22 lack of proper system testing, misuse of resources,
23 and overall lack of readiness.

24 Based on firsthand experience through
25 the constituent services provided by my office, I can

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2 confirm that Hudson Valley residents still today face
3 issues with inaccurate and inflated bills. Large
4 automatic withdrawals from their savings account
5 after not receiving bills for many months.

6 Unclear and confusing bills and others
7 receiving multiple bills in one month. Because of
8 the company's own errors, a rate increase should not
9 be on the table. My office continues to do
10 everything we can to assist residents in resolving
11 their billing concerns with Central Hudson.

12 In good faith, we collaborated with
13 Central Hudson on two customer service sessions in
14 our district office right here across the street.
15 One, on May 24th, 2023, and the other on June 29th,
16 2023, aimed at connecting constituents with Central
17 Hudson representatives for real time assistance.

18 Regrettably, based on feedback from a
19 significant majority of our constituents, Central
20 Hudson has not followed through on the efforts
21 promised during those sessions to resolve, discuss
22 specific bills or provide definitive answers about
23 the billing issues.

24 In light of this feedback, my office
25 has decided to suspend customer service sessions with

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2 Central Hudson for the foreseeable future. Central
3 Hudson is responsible for providing its customers
4 with regular and accurate bills while providing
5 adequate service at fair rates.

6 The company's inability to meet these
7 obligations has caused Hudson Valley residents
8 significant financial and emotional harm and eroded
9 the public trust. The rate increase proposed by
10 Central Hudson stems from their complaints about
11 accounts in arrears totaling in the millions of
12 dollars.

13 This issue was primarily triggered by
14 the company's mishandled rollout of a new billing
15 system. Had Central Hudson maintained their previous
16 level of service during this transition, the company
17 could have prevented its current predicament.

18 Now, attempting to resolve the
19 shortcomings by burdening customers with higher rates
20 is an unjust and unacceptable approach. I appreciate
21 your attention. I appreciate everyone who is here to
22 share their story, it is needed. And I thank you
23 very much for this time.

24 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
25 speaker is Jen Metzger.

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2 MS. METZGER: Good evening. Thank you
3 for the opportunity to provide comments on behalf of
4 our county's residents. I would just simply state
5 that the proposed double digit rate increase is
6 unconscionable on the heels of what thousands of
7 Central Hudson customers have endured over the last
8 two years.

9 Tonight, you will hear testimony from
10 residents who have received what is possibly the
11 worst customer service over a prolonged period of
12 time in anyone's history. And they represent a
13 fraction of the many individual stories of people in
14 our community. Working parents struggling to keep up
15 with rising costs.

16 Seniors living on fixed incomes,
17 students and small businesses, who have suffered
18 anguish, aggravation, and financial duress because of
19 inaccurate and inconsistent billing. These problems
20 all stem from the mismanaged rollout of an \$88
21 million billing system that ratepayers are on the
22 hook for from a prior rate case.

23 The county executive's office has
24 filled with thousands of calls from residents over
25 the past few years related to Central Hudson billing

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2 problems. No other constituent concern comes close
3 to the level of complaints that we have received
4 about Central Hudson billing.

5 While the company has made progress in
6 fixing problems, many residents still have not seen
7 redress and we continue to receive calls about new
8 billing issues. Just today, we received a call from
9 a worried senior, a resident of Kingston who received
10 a \$1,400 bill after not being billed for many months
11 with no explanation of the costs.

12 This senior lives on a modest fixed
13 income, like many seniors and worries about future
14 service interruption and termination. A Rosendale
15 resident with a modest 100,000 square foot home
16 received a \$3,000 bill the equivalent of an entire
17 year's electricity usage.

18 At the time of the complaint, the
19 customer hadn't had a meeting -- meter reading by
20 Central Hudson in six months. A Woodstock resident
21 with a solar array that has generated over 29,000
22 kilowatt hours of electricity, which should have
23 significantly offset usage, received an \$11,000 bill.
24 We just got that call the other day.

25 These are just a few recent examples.

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2 We commonly hear complaints from residents who are on
3 budget billing and have seen sudden increases without
4 notice and without regard to what they can afford to
5 pay. This of course undermines the very purpose of
6 budget billing.

7 You can -- you can understand why our
8 residents are so outraged by the company's request
9 for a rate hike of over 16 percent for electricity
10 and 19 percent for gas service. Moreover, they
11 simply cannot afford it. Over 40 percent of
12 households in Ulster County are considered severely
13 cost burdened, spending more than half their income
14 on housing.

15 The rate increase will add hundreds of
16 dollars a year in costs to keep the lights on leaving
17 little leftover for food, medicine, and other
18 necessities. The compounding impacts of COVID-19,
19 inflationary pressures and a prolonged period of
20 stagnant wages for low and moderate income households
21 have made it impossible for people to keep up with
22 rising costs.

23 Our residents and particularly our
24 struggling households cannot bear a rate increase.
25 Meanwhile, Central Hudson is proposing an increase in

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2 its regulated rate of return or profit from 9 percent
3 to 9.8 percent. An additional \$9 million dollars for
4 the shareholders that they do not deserve from the
5 level of service our customers have been experiencing
6 the last two years.

7 I urge the Commission to please reject
8 this proposed rate increase. Thank you very much.

9 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
10 speaker is Phil Erner.

11 MR. ERNER: Thanks. I didn't expect
12 to go so soon, perhaps you put an elected officials
13 first. Well, I want to thank everybody for coming
14 out here. This is -- you're going to hear the voice
15 of the people of Ulster County and beyond here
16 tonight.

17 I'm one of 23 legislators representing
18 this county in our county government and we
19 unanimously sent you a letter saying we oppose the
20 rate hike proposed and you should keep it at zero --
21 zero percentage change. I personally would support a
22 decrease.

23 I think you should drop the rate at
24 the minimum. This is not new. I have been in the
25 room with you in Albany for different utilities and

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2 heard testimony from dozens of people saying various
3 utilities around the State are not delivering what
4 they're required to deliver.

5 And I've seen you yet allow the rates
6 to increase. In 2020, the early part of the
7 pandemic, I was part of the Ulster economic demands
8 which was taking -- which sent you hundreds of
9 postcards about the outrageous situation with illegal
10 shut offs.

11 And like low current plans, I haven't
12 even heard of some of these -- these things that that
13 the utility can do to supposedly try and work with
14 the people. The bottom line is this. Electricity is
15 a public good. Monopoly electricity utility
16 enterprises for profit should not exist.

17 So although you are not the policy
18 makers in that position, you are in a position to
19 acknowledge the economic reality the people this
20 county and State, so please do the right thing.
21 Thank you.

22 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Next
23 speaker is Michael Bade -- Baden.

24 MR. BADEN: Good evening and -- and
25 thank you for hearing me tonight. Thank you for

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2 holding this hearing here in Kingston in person. I
3 think by the turnout, you can see the demand for this
4 to be resolved.

5 So my name is Mike Baden, I'm the
6 supervisor of the town of Rochester, which is in the
7 southern portion of the county, approximately 7,200
8 residents. I also served as the president of the
9 Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors &
10 Mayors. And even though I'm not speaking directly
11 for all the residents, I believe I am.

12 It's really saddening to me to see, as
13 someone who has lived in this region almost their
14 entire life, to see what a company that was once so
15 well respected has become. This is a company who has
16 lost the confidence completely of the entire county,
17 the entire region and all their customers, simply
18 because they did not handle their responsibility
19 correctly.

20 This company does not deserve to be
21 given a rate increase. I would agree with Mr. Erner,
22 if possible, they should be given a decrease. I can
23 relay some personal stories. One of the town board
24 members on my town board has not received the bill
25 from Central Hudson for over two years.

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2 He subscribes through community solar.

3 He recently got a bill from Nexamp who gets -- only

4 gets their information from Central Hudson as to

5 usage for over \$5,000 for a relatively small home.

6 This is a direct -- direct story of -- of what is

7 occurring. Our own town accounts, we have 10

8 accounts with Central Hudson.

9 Some of them have been appearing to be

10 accurate. We went months and months and months with

11 no bills as was relayed before. Some months we got

12 four bills in the same month, every one with a

13 different number. We also supply -- are subscribed

14 to community solar and I'm very proud to say our town

15 has two community solar facilities with Nexamp.

16 Ironically, the town is not allowed to

17 subscribe to the Nexamp within our town and we

18 subscribe to a different Nexamp site. I believe the

19 law has now been changed. But that being said, the

20 credits are so far behind, months and months, I'm

21 just now getting credits from 2022 Central Hudson on

22 2023, almost 2024 bills. This is unacceptable.

23 This only -- only can fall to the

24 management of Central Hudson and we should not reward

25 their shareholders and their management with these

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2 increases. And I would just like to take a moment to
3 recognize the hard workers of Central Hudson, the
4 linemen, the people who are out there doing the job.

5 They continue, even though they know
6 the company that they are working for is so badly
7 hated and that is a strong word, but an accurate
8 word. But they still get out there in a -- in a
9 snowstorm, in a power outage and do the job because
10 it's what they do. So it's not their fault, we
11 shouldn't hold them responsible.

12 But we should hold the shareholders
13 and the administration and the management. Thank
14 you.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
16 speaker is Susan Nickerson.

17 MS. NICKERSON: Good evening and thank
18 you for having me. I'm here to support everything
19 that you've just heard. Okay. I am about to tell
20 you about a 2-year journey of lies, of deceit, of
21 inconsistencies, and total improprieties. Okay. My
22 journey begins -- began in December of 2021.

23 The account that I'm talking about,
24 we became residents in March -- earlier that March,
25 in January of 2022, I received an outrageous bill for

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2 my electric. I live in a modest house. My husband
3 and I are -- that's just the two of us, we're
4 seniors, I could have lit up the entire town of
5 Saugerties for what the -- what my bills look like.

6 I didn't even put up Christmas lights
7 to have the extra electric. I called and I said this
8 is wrong. Well, we'll get to it. Okay. In summary,
9 I'm going to tell you, I have spoken to over 20, over
10 10 different people from New York through Florida,
11 South Carolina, including Florida again today, I'll
12 get to that, okay.

13 With a total of 10, okay, as well as
14 numerous hours of being put on hold. Okay. In
15 December, when I realized there was a mistake, I
16 called and just for giggles, I left the phone on,
17 we'll get you. Two hours later, I was finally
18 disconnected. Okay. The next day I decided, gee,
19 let's do it again, see what happens.

20 Guess what, I got three hours of work
21 done. And I was still on hold, and then, I got
22 disconnected, okay. I have gone through supervisors
23 in South Carolina, in Florida. I believe there might
24 have been one in Arizona, but I'm not sure, all
25 right. Numerous -- well, we will escalate to this

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2 into that, okay.

3 It went to somebody in Florida who
4 was going to make a resolution and get back to me.
5 No return, okay. There have been threats of, well,
6 we won't turn you over to collection, well, let me
7 advise you, yes, I was, okay. There were two
8 accounts. When the one account went down, and then,
9 you -- the new adopted account came up.

10 The one that was discon --
11 discontinued was turned over to collection. I
12 screamed about that, okay. Let me see. We can go on
13 here. Numerous supervisors, again, on hold for
14 another hour and 12 minutes and eventually got hung
15 up on, okay. I'm in customer service. I do it every
16 day in my life, all right.

17 And I don't give up. And with the
18 help of Laura -- Laura Nordstrom, okay, she's given
19 me the courage to keep going. I am not giving up on
20 this, okay. The bill that I received in that January
21 was outrageous. Do I owe something, yes, I do. And
22 I said I'm willing to pay what I owe.

23 But I'm not willing to pay for
24 something that is outrageous. Well, we'll get to it,
25 okay. The journey continued. I was then told -- let

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2 me see here. I was put into so many queues, I can't
3 even tell you how many. Well, on the 13th of 2022, I
4 was told by a higher up that she has escalated it to
5 a person by the name of Lisa in Florida.

6 I asked for Lisa's last name, I got
7 told Lisa, okay. Again, I was told someone by the
8 name of Meghan will make a determination and will get
9 back to you, nothing. All right. So we're now down
10 into October of 2022. I was told to file a
11 complaint, okay, with the State, which I did.

12 I was then told okay, we have somebody
13 that can help you. She's in the back office. What's
14 the back office? Well, she'll get you, okay. I was
15 finally notified by the Public Service claim that I
16 actually had a ticket number, okay. I was then told,
17 well, we'll put you on a deferred payment plan,
18 what's that?

19 How about paying \$20 a month for the
20 next eight years and one month. But yet when I got
21 the -- the print out of the amortization papers, it
22 only show five years and one month, okay. I talked
23 then to -- I spoke with someone who is the -- let's
24 see, director of asset engagement, okay, okay.

25 Asset engagement, he provided me with

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2 a spreadsheet with the print so tiny that with the
3 best magnifying glass you could hardly read it. I
4 was bound to have somebody take a look at it and they
5 said, Sue this says absolutely nothing, that's kind
6 of what I thought, okay. So then they said, we'll
7 get you onto this deferred document, all right.

8 I just spoke to that. I provided them
9 with a meter reading and this person, director of
10 engagement said, well, that's not right. I said,
11 thank you for agreeing with me, now can we me make a
12 correction? Well, don't pay this bill.

13 I was told three different times do
14 not pay November and January -- or November and
15 December's bills, we'll get it resolved. In the
16 meantime, we're on a budget plan. And I kept making
17 payments. When I got my bill and looking at it,
18 instead of minusing out, the payment that I made,
19 they kept adding into it, okay.

20 So it was -- it was a glaring
21 mathematical error. I said, this is not right.
22 Yeah, you're right, okay, nothing changed. Deferred
23 payment plans went on, they then use the scare
24 tactic, okay. You must complete this by X date,
25 okay. And pay \$20 or it will become null and void

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2 and you will be responsible for paying the entire
3 amount immediately.

4 To which I said, probably something
5 not quite so nice. But it equal no, okay. This went
6 on. I then spoke to him and I said, look, I'm
7 willing to be reasonable about this. I'm willing to
8 pay what I owe. I want at least an adjustment to the
9 deferred payment plan. And I want the amortization
10 plan changed.

11 I'll take it and we'll see what we can
12 do. He came back to me and these were his words,
13 okay. They gave you a \$100 credit back in -- I think
14 was March or whatever it was. It felt like it was,
15 well, let's throw the dog a bone, okay. And see if
16 she'll take it. Well, the dog didn't take the bone,
17 okay.

18 Let me see, bills -- bills totaling --
19 I got five different bills each with different due
20 dates and by the way, each different amounts on all
21 five bills. I'm supposed to believe, okay, in
22 something that's coming up imploring, I greatly
23 oppose this proposal.

24 Why should I believe anything now,
25 when I have been lied to, okay, bold face lied to and

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2 said, when I have been told, oh, that's a print
3 error, okay, don't worry about that. When -- when I
4 was threatened with being turned over to collection
5 and my power being turned off.

6 No, that's a print error, this just
7 they're using an old template. Then why don't they
8 fix it and get a new template. Well, that was pre
9 COVID. I says, this is post COVID, get a new
10 template. We'll look into it, okay.

11 So the clincher to this for me was
12 when management, they refused to make an adjustment
13 to your payment plan due to their billing
14 improprieties. So they admitted that there were
15 improprieties, which we all know. But -- okay, but
16 they will -- they will give you the \$100 credit as a
17 miscellaneous adjustment, okay.

18 They do not want to be -- let me see.
19 Let me see, I have this here, the exact words I want
20 to read it to you. Central Hudson is not going to
21 set a precedent to adjust the bill or a payment plan,
22 if word gets out about adjustment to the damages on
23 your two-year journey. That was the final straw.
24 Okay.

25 I'm aware of the class action suit. I

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2 hope that takes it's due course, okay. But I'm
3 appealing to everyone in this room, stand up, do not
4 -- do not support this budget. Okay. And I thank
5 Laura Nordstrom for giving me the courage to come
6 here tonight.

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. What I'm
8 going to do just to maybe make it go a little bit
9 more smoothly, if possible. I'm going to call out
10 the next speaker. And then, I'm going to let the
11 next person who's up know so that they're ready to
12 go. So our next speaker is Kathy Albert and will be
13 followed by Jeanne Edwards.

14 MS. ALBERT: Hello, my name is Kathy
15 Albert. I live out in Stone Ridge, New York. And I
16 too agree with the previous speakers. And I left
17 some notes at home on purpose because I thought we
18 were being held to three minutes to speak. And I
19 couldn't go through all of the days and times that I
20 called and what happened as a result of that.

21 So I just made a few bullet remarks
22 that I would like you to know about. One of them is
23 that the estimated bills that Central Hudson agreed
24 to end that practice and they have not done so yet.
25 I would like to know the date from them when that is

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2 going to end. I've been a customer since 1967 and I
3 have never seen a meter reader.

4 High on realistic charges for my usage
5 is what I do see, though. I live on a fixed income.
6 I'm a retiree. I live alone with -- and frugal usage
7 of electric. I'm a three time cancer survivor. I've
8 just finished fighting my cancer. And now I'm
9 fighting Central Hudson. I've received bills as high
10 as \$850 per month.

11 There is no way that that can be
12 correct. I live alone. I rarely have company, it's
13 just ludicrous. I've called Central Hudson. I've
14 met with a representative to no avail. They explain
15 how transportation charges were arrived. Once again,
16 no satisfaction for me.

17 I want a letter explaining how they --
18 how they arrived at a reimbursement rate if I'm lucky
19 enough to get one. I want to be reimbursed all the
20 money for overage fees since nigh on 2021, when
21 Fortis took over the billing. In February of '23, I
22 was told that there were over 3000 customers with
23 complaints already at that time.

24 If common man ran a business like
25 this, it would be out of business in no time. In

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2 2021, I was hospitalized for three months and my
3 house sat empty. I still got monthly bills for \$535
4 each month. And I have all my bills right there,
5 sorry. I'm sorry.

6 All my bills from October 6th of 19 --
7 2021 when Fortis first -- first took over. And all
8 this trouble began then. Also, I have every article
9 in chronological order. On October 12th of '23, Joe
10 Jenkins an employee at Central Hudson said in the
11 Freeman quote, any customer who is financially
12 impacted by this transaction has been provided a
13 refund of the bill of credit or adjusted their bill,
14 unquote.

15 This is untrue. It's an insult to
16 those of us who have been impacted by their
17 negligence. Central Hudson does not deserve to be
18 granted the rate hike. I want to thank Jen Metzger
19 and Michelle Hinchey for providing the opportunity
20 for us to meet with you people this evening.

21 They've worked for months with irate
22 customers listening to our complaints and asking for
23 help. And who do we go to and we keep getting the
24 same response from Central Hudson, which is next to
25 nothing. It's just a waste of our time to even call

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2 or try to work with them because it's not fruitful
3 for -- so that's my speech. Thank you.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Next
5 speaker will be Jeanne or Jeanne Edwards to be
6 followed by -- and I apologize anyone if I butcher
7 your name, I don't intend to, I'm doing the best I
8 can here, with Liselle LaFrance.

9 MS. LAFRANCE: LaFrance.

10 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Sorry.

11 MS. LAFRANCE: Thank you.

12 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

13 MS. EDWARDS: I thank you for this
14 opportunity tonight for my neighbors and myself to be
15 heard. This is appalling, totally appalling. This
16 is almost like a dictatorship that you're going to
17 tell us how much we're going to pay you and there's
18 nothing we can do about it. There is nothing we
19 could possibly do.

20 If I was a corporation, hire a company
21 that's not capable of keeping anything straight. I
22 mean, who's watching the back door, anybody? And I
23 don't mean to be snarky, but I'm a senior citizen.
24 I'm 63 years old, getting ready to retire. And I
25 don't think I really can.

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2 I live with two sisters that are
3 retired that we all moved in together, because of
4 bills. I have a daughter that lives next door to me,
5 who goes to school and works at U.A.R.C. for \$15 an
6 hour. I have senior citizens in my neighborhood that
7 are barely making it.

8 If it wasn't for the food pantries,
9 your company is causing a ripple effect with your
10 increases and not even paying attention that everyone
11 gave back at COVID time. But for 40 years, I've been
12 paying you a salary.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I just want to
14 clarify something. We're not here on behalf of the
15 company on Central Hudson, okay, so we're here --.

16 MS. EDWARDS: No, I'm getting to --

17 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. I just want
18 to make sure that.

19 MS. EDWARDS: Yeah, I'm just --

20 A.L.J. COSTELLO: That's good, that's
21 fine.

22 MS. EDWARDS: Because I'm frustrated.

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: That's fine.

24 MS. EDWARDS: And I'm sure everyone in
25 this room is very frustrated also.

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2 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I just wanted to
3 make it clear that we're not here on behalf of the
4 company, that's fine.

5 MS. EDWARDS: I'm (unintelligible)
6 yeah.

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Yeah, that's fine.

8 MS. EDWARDS: No, I know. But the
9 bottom line is to have an increase so high. The
10 ripple effect is, we're paying mortgages or rents.
11 We're paying our taxes. We're getting -- the food
12 increase has gone crazy. Thank God for food
13 pantries, thank God for generous people and other
14 corporations have given back or have made things
15 available so you can make it affordable.

16 But the rate increase you're going for
17 is affecting every part of our lives. And it's not
18 in a good way. The company is doing well, obviously.
19 But what about us. And that's what it comes down to.
20 Your company was built on hard working people,
21 providing a service for the people.

22 What's going on? What happened?
23 Where did we lose it? And then, you hire a company
24 that can't handle the meter reading, sending out
25 bills, doubling bills, I mean, unbelievable. I got a

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2 bill this month \$850. All three of us work 40 hour
3 weeks. We sleep for eight hours, nine hours. We're
4 out of the house for eight to nine hours.

5 How much electricity is being used
6 here? And we have, you know, energy saving
7 refrigerators and stuff like that, like reality is
8 the ripple effect is getting to be too much.
9 Somebody's getting fat off a bony cow, I don't know
10 how, but it is. And it's just -- it's unbelievable,
11 it's appalling, it's totally appalling.

12 And our seniors, we just -- we have to
13 build more housing because they can't afford to stay
14 in the house that they lived in for 40 years because
15 of bills of gas and electric. This is -- this really
16 is very heartbreaking. And I don't think we should
17 have this conversation too much longer.

18 In a world like this where you're
19 stabbing us, you're making us bleed and there's
20 almost no blood left. Stop with the rate hikes. Why
21 don't you come down to use in some solutions of maybe
22 we could go by people's income, give back, give
23 something back, COVID really gave back the -- you
24 know, the companies.

25 This company is not giving us

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2 anything. 40 years I paid every month to you. And
3 I'm still getting rate increases. I'm not getting
4 the quality of service. I get hung up on just like
5 everyone else. I have the same story. But I can't
6 watch my senior neighbors while everybody is sitting
7 up in their corporation saying, well, we need this
8 and we need that.

9 Well, I think that you need to look at
10 the people and I think you need to hear the people.
11 I don't believe in this rate increase. And that's
12 all I have to say, thank you.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. And
14 after our current speaker, the next speaker will be
15 Gloria DeFalco-Hamilton.

16 MS. LAFRANCE: Thank you for having
17 this hearing tonight. My name is Liselle LaFrance
18 and I'm the president of Historic Huguenot Street in
19 New Paltz, New York. I don't have such a personal
20 story to share. These stories are breaking my heart
21 to hear them. I live in Albany.

22 And I'm really happy to live in Albany
23 because we have National Grid. But it's affecting
24 non-profits significantly. And I think that's a
25 point that needs to be made. Historic Huguenot

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2 Street, which is a 10 acre National Historic Site,
3 struggling non-profit. We have 15 Central Hudson
4 accounts.

5 And we've been trying to rectify those
6 accounts, you know, make them match up, we have our
7 accounting specialists working on it, non-stop,
8 trying to make sure that the numbers add up and none
9 of them add up and those 15 accounts. We went to sit
10 down with Central Hudson, showed our spreadsheets.

11 They -- they still did not resolve it.
12 They still did not come to terms on our repayment
13 plan. We need time to make that repayment because we
14 have current bills that we're trying to keep up with
15 -- with Central Hudson.

16 And we have inflationary costs of all
17 kinds, including health care and all the rest. The
18 billing debacle definitely added to our financial
19 stresses. And that's on top of what we went through
20 during COVID. And this is just really putting us on
21 the brink, quite frankly, financially.

22 We can't handle the extraordinary
23 increases any more than these residents can. And I'm
24 sure that I'm not speaking just for Historic Huguenot
25 Street, but all the non-profits out there because

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2 we're all kind of in that boat right now because
3 there are no more COVID resources at our disposal.
4 So thank you for considering non-profits.

5 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Okay.
6 The next speaker is Gloria DeFalco-Hamilton to be
7 followed by Alexis Danzig.

8 MS. DANZIG: Thank you. I live in the
9 Bloomington area in a very small apartment. I'm by
10 myself, I'm a widow, I'm retired. I've been there
11 about five years. My average monthly Central Hudson
12 bill is usually below \$100. My kilowatts used are
13 about 800 a month.

14 One year ago, I received a bill for
15 \$444 kilowatt 1600. I was outraged. I immediately
16 got on the phone. I waited two hours and I got
17 disconnected. And that kept happening. I -- I
18 finally went through the Department of Public
19 Services. I was tired of trying to reach Central
20 Hudson.

21 I wanted to resolve it with them. I -
22 - that -- that was not my bill. I don't know how
23 that amount got to be that high. I don't use that
24 much electric and I was away twice over the period.
25 So on September 5th, 2022, the New York State

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2 Department of Public Services, Office of Consumer
3 Services received my complaint against Central Hudson
4 disputing a bill for the period of September 4 --
5 these would help, 2022 to October 26th, 2022 in the
6 amount of \$444.35.

7 They assigned a Central Hudson
8 representative to work with me to resolve the matter.
9 On September 14th, 2023, a whole year later, I
10 received a phone call while I was on vacation from a
11 Jennifer, no last name given. She left a message,
12 very low, soft spoken. The transcription was not
13 good at all.

14 I really could not understand the
15 message. Since that date, I tried to call her six
16 times. I need to talk about this. I need to get it
17 resolved. I have not paid a Central Hudson bill in a
18 year because I am not going to pay and let them think
19 that I am -- trying to think of the right word,
20 right.

21 That \$444 is not my bill, so I am
22 waiting until it gets resolved, and then, I will
23 start paying. But my bill is now up to \$1,500. So
24 as I said, I called six times, I left detailed
25 messages. She has not returned my calls.

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2 I have made copies of this letter and
3 I'm sending them, I've already sent this to Central
4 Hudson. It's impossible to resolve this matter if
5 the representative that was assigned to resolve it
6 with me is not returning my call and I cannot reach
7 Central Hudson.

8 I said that if I do not hear from her
9 in a week, I plan on pursuing this claim with the New
10 York State Department of Public Services. They have
11 not assigned me a case. They said to try to work
12 with the representative, Jennifer. And then, if I'm
13 not happy that I could go back to them. And so that
14 is where I'm at now.

15 So thank you very much for being here.
16 Thank you for listening to us. I -- I think Central
17 Hudson does not deserve an increase at all. They are
18 really screwing people in my opinion.

19 A.L.J. Costello: Thank you. Alexis
20 Danzig to be followed by Carol -- looks like Strave.

21 MS. STRAVE: Strave.

22 A.L.J. Costello: Strave, okay.

23 MS. DANZIG: Thank you very much to
24 the Department of Public Service for convening this
25 hearing. Thank you very much to the Judges. Mr.

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2 Costello received my letter earlier today, describing
3 the process that I've gone through with the Public
4 Service Commission, which I will get to in a moment.

5 I took wise counsel from my son,
6 earlier today, he's 24. He said Mom, you cannot call
7 them that. You will get in trouble. I say, I will
8 just refer to Central Hudson as scoundrels. You
9 could fill in the blank. And the reason why I'm here
10 is because of a \$1,500 bill, which I received for one
11 month, this past winter.

12 It was bracketed by a bill for \$160
13 and another bill for \$116. My August bill was for
14 \$19. So I have asked for and not yet received, it's
15 been a four month period now, an accounting review of
16 my -- of my account. The letter that I received from
17 the Public Service Commission basically bounces me
18 out of the system.

19 And it says that I should go back to
20 go and start the process of getting on a plan with
21 the scoundrels. So we have a number of really
22 horrible processes here. We -- we have elected
23 officials, who are on the case. Did you know that we
24 have an organization called the Public Utility Law
25 Project?

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2 Their phone number is 877-669-2572.

3 But they're a small public law pro -- project. And
4 they have a paucity of lawyers working on this issue.
5 Our elected officials have no constituent service
6 people, who are dedicated to the issue. I hope that
7 Jen Metzger and Senator Hinchey are still here.

8 Because as much as I like talking to
9 their frontline people, it is a disservice. Look at
10 -- look at all the people in this room for every one
11 of us. There is someone who spent the entire day
12 working and who is too tired to show up to this
13 meeting after -- like my baker, who gets up at three
14 o'clock every morning to make sure that my community
15 has fresh bread, she is not here.

16 She told me what she does in response
17 to the outrageous bills from the scoundrels. She
18 pays a minimum and she crosses her fingers that her
19 lights aren't turned off. This is a disgrace. It is
20 a disgrace that we do not yet, after two years of
21 being embroiled in this terrible system, have a
22 centralized way for dealing with our problems.

23 And that it's taken this long for the
24 Public Service Commission to hold meetings so that we
25 can see each other face-to-face and make common

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2 cause. I know that it's difficult for people to get
3 together and engage in direct action. Not everybody
4 is suited to it. A lot of people are scared.

5 And it's becoming winter time, not a
6 great season for direct action. But there is lots of
7 things that direct action brings, including positives
8 of shared information. When I talk to my new
9 neighbors, some of them have no idea that we have an
10 Ulster County Executive.

11 When I talk to my new neighbors,
12 they've never heard of PULP, this is wrong. This is
13 a way to keep us all atomized and from speaking to
14 each other. We have a petition. I'd like you to
15 sign up. I'm not going to bug you for money.
16 Because that's not what direct action is about.

17 I have demands here. I wrote them
18 myself, you can add to them. I'm not a despot. I'm
19 interested in democratic process. I'm interested in
20 getting together face-to-face with or without a pot
21 luck and making common cause. So please sign the
22 petition. If you give me your email, I'll send you
23 email information.

24 I'm not going to publicize everybody's
25 addresses. We can all meet or we don't have to meet.

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2 If you give me your phone number, I'm going to text
3 you for your email. So here's the petition. And we
4 can figure out next steps together.

5 Because once we solve this problem,
6 there are going to be more issues. How do we make
7 sustainable energy possible for our communities and
8 for our children's communities? This is not just
9 Central Hudson and the Public Service Commission.
10 This is for the future, thank you.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Carol
12 Strave to be followed by Robert Richardson.

13 MS. STRAVE: Hi, thank you for coming
14 and hearing us out. My problems can't match
15 everybody else's, but I still feel it's important to
16 share. My main complaint is like there's no
17 communication -- one of my many complaints, there's
18 no communication of -- if I hadn't been on top of it
19 last December onwards, I didn't get a bill that I
20 didn't get a bill.

21 Anyway, I contacted Central Hudson,
22 that didn't do anything. And to make a long story
23 short, I ended up contacting the county, Laura, thank
24 you so much. Laura actually helped me navigate
25 through this. And I actually, she helped me file the

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2 complaint with the State.

3 And about a month after I filed the
4 complaint I actually got phone -- a call from a
5 representative from Central Hudson, who was extremely
6 helpful, I was one of the lucky people. But the
7 bills on the computer, I mean, it's just like 369,
8 268, and then, my -- all these minuses, I mean, I
9 couldn't read the bill.

10 I mean, I wasn't getting bills, I
11 couldn't read the bills and I kept -- I'm a senior
12 I'm on fixed income, I'm on a fixed income. We're
13 not eligible for any assistance. We're just over
14 that line. So I had huge anxiety. Is my electricity
15 going to get shut off, how we're going to pay this
16 huge bill at some point.

17 But this woman, Shalen from Central
18 Hudson, was very good and she helped me get through
19 it. But and they kept saying, well, you can just
20 send some money in. I'm going to send money into
21 this place that can't do simple accounting, no.

22 And finally, we ended up with this
23 pretty -- I mean, the bills that I'm hearing, it's
24 just, it's heartbreaking. I mean, ours is so small
25 compared to that. But -- so I'm also, you know, it's

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2 rate increases unheard of. Health insurance is going
3 up for seniors, medical insurance, you know,
4 medications are going up.

5 I mean, this is unconscionable what
6 they're asking for. Especially for the -- the degree
7 of mismanagement, how could we trust them? And then,
8 this is where I want to introduce a little bit of
9 humor, oh, you can go downstairs and you can use your
10 smartphone to read the meter.

11 I have a flip phone, I can't read the
12 meter. You want us to do your job, no away. So the
13 monthly billing and I agree monthly, if you're
14 especially, if you're senior in fixed income monthly
15 billing it's absolutely necessary because, you -- you
16 don't have any idea how to balance things out and how
17 we budget.

18 So I'm just feel like this is really
19 not okay what they're asking for. And -- and maybe a
20 sliding scale fee for incomes, I mean, then that
21 would just screw their computer system up even more.
22 They wouldn't -- they can't figure out the straight
23 thing.

24 But at some point down the road, it
25 would be really great like some kind of a sliding

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2 scale fee, something like that. But anyway, thank
3 you.

4 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

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

6 Okay. Robert Richardson, to be
7 followed by Charles Defee.

8 MR. RICHARDSON: Good evening. I
9 guess the good thing about going last is everyone
10 before you pretty much covers everything you're going
11 to say, so I'll just be redundant and tell it anyway.
12 My issues are basically with the way they're reading
13 meters.

14 One month, they send someone there
15 allegedly to read the meter. Next month, they
16 estimate it. But yet, on the following bills,
17 through the whole year, you never see any
18 adjustments. So you just keep paying and paying and
19 paying.

20 I've been double billed for about six
21 different months. Triple billed one month. And you
22 call them to try to get things straightened out.
23 They say, well, send me your meter readings. So I
24 got to go out of my way, on my own time, take
25 pictures of my -- my meters, send them to them.

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2 They say, if -- and if you're lucky
3 enough to get someone on the phone, they say, we'll
4 be in touch with you in about a week or so. No
5 problem. A month goes by, nothing. Call them up
6 again, and do the same process over and over. You
7 just can't get a hold of anybody.

8 And I think the reason was, I mean as
9 far as I know, Central Hudson is owned by a Canadian
10 company. Which really screwed things up when that
11 took place, that sale, a bunch of years ago. I had
12 one -- I had two houses at one time, one I inherited
13 and one I lived in.

14 The house that I inherited, I was just
15 cleaning up to get ready for sale. But yet the bills
16 for that house, where everything was turned off
17 except maybe the clock on the stove, the bills were
18 about \$20, \$30 less than the house I was living in.

19 Using gas, using electric, I don't
20 know how that could be. That's impossible. And I
21 vehemently oppose any kind of rate increase by these
22 people. I mean, if they want to fix things or -- or
23 pay people more money, that ought to be what the
24 profits are for.

25 It's not fair the people of the

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2 country to make, you know, pay -- pay their -- their
3 bills. That's what I make money for. I called
4 several people. One time, I had -- I finally got a
5 hold of a person. I called the Consumer Affairs
6 Bureau in Albany.

7 They got a hold of some executive, I
8 guess, in Canada or Buffalo or somewhere, and they
9 called me back. She went back six months, looked at
10 my bills. I ended up having like a \$1000 credit, I
11 think it was, because they were so screwed up.

12 But then, as soon as that was taken
13 care of, here we go again. Now, it's been two years
14 and I had to pay the one last bill I had to sell a
15 house because it was in probate, so I had to close it
16 out and I had to pay the bill.

17 I've called people even a couple times
18 from your office and never got phone calls back. I'm
19 pretty well resigned to just eating that money
20 because I don't know what else to do anymore. And I
21 just think it's -- it's wrong and it -- and this,
22 they want 16% for electricity and 19% for gas.

23 Yeah. That's 35 -- 35% per bill, per
24 customer, per household, which is ridiculous. Do you
25 know how many people they have? I just think it's

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2 wrong and that's -- that's the reason why Central
3 Hudson is one of the companies that are driving
4 people out of the state because it's just too
5 expensive to live here anymore.

6 And that's one of the big reasons, you
7 can't afford the energy costs, so that's it. Yeah.

8 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

9 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Charles
10 Defee, to be followed by Elizabeth Ellis.

11 MR. DEFEE: I'll be brief. I have
12 several instances here where Central Hudson has
13 managed to send me five bills in one month. 1,600,
14 2,000, 2,400, 2,800, 1,100 in one month. Then, in
15 June of 2022, they sent me three bills. 2,200,
16 2,600, 3,000. Anybody know which one of these bills
17 is the right bill to pay? I don't.

18 Their bills are incomprehensible. You
19 cannot read them. You have to have a master's degree
20 in mathematics to read their bills. March of 2023,
21 they sent me two bills, \$4,306, \$3,577. April 4th of
22 2023, they sent me four bills, 3,615, 4,030, 4,445,
23 and 3,126.

24 I don't know which of these bills is
25 correct. I don't think they know which of these

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2 bills is correct. Their billing system is so
3 corrupted right now, I don't think they could
4 possibly know how much I owe.

5 But they're pretty convinced because
6 they sent me my last bill, they say I owe them
7 5,011.67. This is happening all the while, while for
8 12 months I've been paying them \$424 every month.
9 And my bill never goes down.

10 My bill goes up, not down. I
11 installed heat pumps a year ago, which are supposed
12 to be more efficient and energy saving. My bill
13 never goes down. My bill goes up. Back in 2022,
14 this would be someplace around March. Here it is.

15 On March 28th, I had a credit on my
16 bill of \$3,579.69. And since March of 2022, I've
17 somehow managed to run up an \$8,000 electric bill.
18 Because now I owe them \$5,000. I don't -- I don't
19 get it. I don't -- I don't pretend to understand it.

20 THE AUDIENCE: Don't pay it.

21 MR. DEFEE: I'm not. I'm not paying
22 any of this money, I can tell you that. In closing,
23 I would just like to -- I'm sure you people know who
24 Con Edison is. I worked for Con Edison for 38 years.
25 In 38 years, I don't want to tell you how many

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2 billing programs we had to write, including Y2K, when
3 everybody was losing their minds over what was going
4 to happen, and Con Edison had no trouble.

5 Our customers at most went two weeks
6 without a bill. That was the most that I ever saw.
7 This company does not serve anywhere near as many
8 people as Con Edison does. And they can't get a
9 simple billing program written properly.

10 Instead, now they say I owe \$5,000.
11 It's incomprehensible to me, as is this rate increase
12 request is incomprehensible. It's immoral. It's
13 unethical. Thank you.

14 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you.
15 Elizabeth Ellis, to be followed by John Schoonmaker.

16 MS. ELLIS: Okay. I'll try to keep
17 this as short as possible because you've had a lot of
18 people articulating their frustrations. My question
19 is, what can the Public Service Commission do? And
20 as one of you presented, you can adopt the rate
21 increase, you can reject it, or you can -- I'm not
22 quite sure, suggest modifying the conditions.

23 Clearly, the spirit here is of a lot
24 of very, very frustrated people. I don't know how
25 much pressure you can put onto a company like Central

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2 Hudson to get their act together. And until they can
3 get their billing service somehow manageable, resolve
4 these thousands of frustrated customers, I don't
5 think that there should be any kind of rate increase.

6 Like many -- like many people, I avoid
7 opening the monthly bill from Central Hudson, knowing
8 that it's going to be a horror of one kind or
9 another. Sometimes it's okay, sometimes it's
10 absolutely absurd. One of the things I have noticed
11 is a couple of years ago, two people arrived at the
12 door and said, oh, we're here to put in a new meter.

13 Your old meter doesn't work or
14 something to that effect. I figured they knew what
15 they were doing. They put in a new meter. Since
16 then, there have been wild swings in my usage. I'm
17 not talking about the amount, the usage.

18 I'm a single person living alone,
19 using not even -- I don't use gas. I use only a very
20 limited amount of, well, electric. So I don't know
21 if there's problems with their meters that they
22 installed. But there clearly are serious problems.

23 And I don't know how much you can --
24 how much pressure you can bring to bear, what can be
25 done to get Central Hudson to pay attention and not

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2 send us off to somebody in Florida or Texas or
3 something to resolve and not get an answer. Thank
4 you.

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

6 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. John
7 Schoonmaker, to be followed by Deena Turner.

8 MR. WHITE: Judge, can I speak to you
9 for one second?

10 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Yes.

11 A.L.J. MORENO: Sure. Excuse us just
12 one moment.

13 MR. WHITE: So there's some folks that
14 need to catch a shuttle bus by 08:45 p.m. It's the
15 only way to get home.

16 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay.

17 MR. WHITE: And some of them have
18 registered to speak, and they are thinking that their
19 bus will --

20 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Do we know who they
21 are?

22 MR. WHITE: No. But if you want to
23 make an announcement, I don't know who they are. I
24 was just told have they got any legislator.

25 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay. Thank you.

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2 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

3 A.L.J. MORENO: Yeah.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. Sorry about
5 that. We'll --

6 MR. SCHOONMAKER: No worries. Hi, my
7 name is John Schoonmaker, and I'm a resident of
8 Sardis. I'm a co-chair of Mid-Hudson Valley D.S.A.'s
9 Eco Socialism Working Group. And a co-chair of the
10 Old Third Dutchess Chapter of the Working Families
11 Party.

12 And like everyone here, I give a
13 portion of my monthly earnings to Central Hudson. We
14 are in an affordability crisis our region has not
15 seen before. Housing prices and rents have
16 skyrocketed with no relief in sight.

17 The cost of everything that we need to
18 survive has risen through the corporate greed, using
19 inflation as an excuse to strip the working class of
20 every last cent we have. Yet here we are, having to
21 beg you to prevent a greedy monopoly from taking more
22 from us.

23 Why is it that the consumer is always
24 the one asked to make a sacrifice? Why does it never
25 work the way -- the other way around? Central Hudson

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2 is worth millions. I'm sure they can afford to not
3 just keep the rates the same, but decrease them.

4 It's time that they made a sacrifice
5 for us. But we know Central Hudson does not care
6 about their cust -- customers' well-being. They care
7 only about their bottom line. They claim the billing
8 errors are fixed, yet I see people sharing erroneous
9 bills on social media that were sent to them just
10 four days ago.

11 So why are we even considering
12 rewarding them for their sheer incompetence? This is
13 ridiculous. I implore the P.S.C. to do the right
14 thing. You should not only deny these rate hikes,
15 but make Central Hudson reduce them.

16 They have not been held accountable
17 for their gross negligence. They have not been held
18 accountable for the anxiety and frustration they've
19 caused thousands of customers. And the working class
20 can't afford to give any more because we have nothing
21 left.

22 And it's also very clear and evident
23 from everyone's stories today that we must not only
24 stop these rate hikes, because we'll be back here in
25 what, two to three years when they're asking for

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2 more. But we must dump these corporate utilities and
3 fight for public power by the people and for the
4 people. Thank you very much.

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

6 MS. TURNER: Hello! Everyone, I'm
7 Deena Rae Turner. And I just wanted to say that I am
8 so thankful for everyone that's taken their entire
9 evening to come out. And I'm thankful to you four
10 for being here.

11 As I said, my name is Deena Turner.
12 I've lived in the Hudson Valley for 23 years. I've
13 owned two small businesses here. In my life, I've
14 lived in three places and experienced three power
15 companies. It is always the same story.

16 Struggles against what seems like
17 intentionally obfuscating billing practices.
18 Powerlessness in the face of impending rate hikes and
19 hardships, many times even poverty and eviction
20 caused by ridiculously high power bills.

21 And this Central Hudson story is worse
22 than all of them. I am proudly speaking on behalf of
23 the Mid-Hudson Valley Democratic Socialists of
24 America. That's a mouthful. A politically organized
25 movement of people that have helped elect

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2 representatives who are advocating, quite effectively
3 I might add, for the needs of the working people of
4 our region.

5 I beseech you to listen to all that's
6 being said tonight in this room. We the hard working
7 people of the Mid-Hudson Valley deserve your ear
8 before you make this very important decision that
9 affects all of our lives.

10 First of all, if Central Hudson needs
11 funds, it shouldn't be requesting them from
12 ratepayers. Its C.E.O. makes millions, and the
13 company has long touted its record profits. They
14 brag about it. The giant corporation Fortis, which
15 owns Central Hudson, owns five mega utilities.

16 Their C.E.O. makes over \$5,000,000 a
17 year. Their former C.E.O. made \$10,000,000 in
18 salary. Central Hudson customers already can't pay
19 their bills. Central Hudson's own documents show
20 that customer arrears have grown by 1,044% to
21 96,000,000 since the beginning of the pandemic in
22 February of 2020.

23 We cannot be expected to pay even
24 more. The wages of working people have fallen, not
25 risen, in decades, in four decades. But Central

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2 Hudson's profits always increase even though their
3 customer service is abysmal. Abysmal, in -- in the
4 trash.

5 Most of us in this room would lose our
6 jobs if we performed like that. Central Hudson can
7 certainly, without a doubt, afford to continue with
8 delivery, billing, and residential maintenance
9 services without increasing rates.

10 And in fact, considering how much rate
11 payer money was wasted in the rollout of the new
12 billing system, the Public Service Commission, you
13 guys, should strongly consider decreasing Central
14 Hudson's delivery rates for the next 10 years, to
15 make it up to the stressed out and strapped rate
16 payers.

17 We believe this is deeper than billing
18 issues. Energy is not a luxury. It's a necessity.
19 It's a basic need. It's even a right. It should not
20 be used to give corporate utilities guaranteed
21 profits. It's time they play their part, do their
22 part, and pay their fair share, or get out of the
23 way. Thank you.

24 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. We -- we
25 were notified that there are some people here that

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2 may have to take a shuttle bus at 08:45 p.m. If
3 that's the case, please go to -- we're asking you if
4 you'd go down to our Office of Consumer Services
5 table outside and give your name so that we can have
6 a list of those people that have to leave.

7 And we'll try to work with you in that
8 fashion once we get the name of those people. And
9 while that's going on, we're going to continue at
10 this point with Mary Ann Donaldson.

11 THE AUDIENCE: What number are you on,
12 Judge?

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Well, this -- this
14 is just -- these are not the elected officials who
15 went first, so this is number 15 is the next person.

16 MS. DONALDSON: Hi, my name is Mary
17 Ann Donaldson. Thank you for coming here. And I'm
18 just going to wing this. I'm listening to everybody
19 here and I can relate to just about everything that
20 everyone's saying through.

21 I have my own nightmare with Central
22 Hudson billing and waiting on long hold, all of that.
23 Basically, what happened to me, I'll just be very
24 brief, is I've been on budget billing for 20 years.
25 I understand how it works.

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2 I've had years where I've had a little
3 shortage, I've had years where I didn't have a bill.
4 So I understand the concept of budget billing, never
5 had issues, until April of 2022, I received a bill
6 for over \$900.

7 And I was like, whoa, what is this?
8 Called Central Hudson, waited, disconnected, waited,
9 disconnected. This went on for weeks and weeks and
10 weeks and weeks. Finally get ahold of someone, oh,
11 well, that -- you were over. That's your overage.

12 I'm like, well, how come my prior
13 bills don't reflect any of that? Which, none of them
14 did. And as someone said, you can't make rhyme or
15 reason out of these bills. They make no sense
16 whatsoever. And when I said that to the Central
17 Hudson representative, I was told, well, you need to
18 go online.

19 The paper bills are not accurate. She
20 admitted it to me. You need to go online and you
21 need to -- you need to look at the online billing the
22 way it's broken down. It's clear. I said, well,
23 what if I don't have a computer?

24 You know, playing devil's advocate.
25 What if I don't have a computer? I'm looking at my

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2 paper statement. It should be clear. It should be
3 accurate. All my other bills are clear and accurate.
4 Okay. Long story short.

5 So they increased -- because I was
6 over, they increased my budget \$60, okay? I'm on a
7 very fixed income. I'm a senior. I'm a person with
8 a disability. I was like, I can't afford \$60 more a
9 month. Well, you know what, we'll put you on a
10 budget or whatever.

11 I'll make -- I -- you -- you're going
12 to get what I can give you. I fought with them. I
13 had other people review the bills. They were like,
14 no one could make more reason out of it. I ended up
15 filing a complaint with the State. I was given a
16 rep.

17 I was told, yes, there is issues. I
18 was told to apply for relief money, which I did. I
19 was told that the arrears would be taken care of.
20 But while this was all going on, me, because I'm --
21 oh, nice girl here, said, out of good faith, I'm
22 going to continue paying what my previous budget
23 amount was.

24 Which I have, and which I continue to
25 do so. My bill, even though I'm paying each month,

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2 is going up instead of coming down. Recently, not
3 only did they increase my budget, which I was told
4 they would decrease it because it was too high, \$60.

5 They said, yes. Yeah. We're going to
6 bring it down, but it never went down. They ended
7 up, in November of last year, increasing it, my
8 budget, another \$30 a month. So now my budget has
9 been increased, \$90.

10 Never got the relief money, and just
11 found out recently why. I was told that the reason
12 you didn't get the relief money was you started
13 paying on it. So I said, so basically -- no. I was
14 paying on my current bill because I didn't want my
15 current bill to fall behind. Oh, but that's not how
16 it works.

17 All that money, the money that you're
18 paying us, we're applying that to your owed bill. So
19 we're not -- that's why you didn't get the relief
20 money. Okay. Whatever. So I just got my -- my
21 budget billing, because now they are doing it every
22 six months. They stopped.

23 Where they -- for the budget billing,
24 they would review it every six months. A few years,
25 I didn't get anything new. I would just get a new

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2 bill and -- and for the longest time, my budget had
3 stayed the same. Well, they just increased me
4 another \$30.

5 You know, hey. And they want -- and
6 they want a 16%. So that's part of my story, and I'm
7 just going to -- I'm just going to leave you with
8 this, okay? The Social Security COLA for 2024 is
9 3.2% and Central Hudson wants a 16% increase. Are
10 you kidding me?

11 I'm sure a lot of these people on a
12 fixed income can't do it. So I'm just -- I'm hoping
13 you just do the right thing. They don't deserve an
14 increase. As everybody's saying, they should be
15 giving us a decrease. Thank you.

16 A.L.J. COSTELLO: So our next speaker
17 will be Maria Sobrado, to be followed by Andrew
18 Willner.

19 MS. SOBRADO: Hello! I thought I was
20 coming here because of complaints that I had filed.
21 Remember when Pat Ryan, way back when --

22 THE AUDIENCE: May 3rd, 19 --

23 MS. SOBRADO: Yeah. He came -- like a
24 full-time job for me. I went on to the Public
25 Service Commission. I went on to the -- whatever.

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2 I've been on -- I've filed my complaints. But what I
3 want to do is take you back in time, because I'm
4 really happy that this is about delivery charges.

5 I'm thrilled, because in 2016, or
6 thereabouts, I noticed on my central Hudson bill that
7 I had a \$159 delivery fee. My normal usage was \$125
8 like every month. So I made -- I don't know, 10
9 calls to try to find out who regulates this.

10 Finally found out that it was the
11 Public Service Commission. So I called, spoke to a
12 young guy. And I said, excuse me, I'm very nervous.
13 I said, what is the deal with this? Like, because at
14 first, I called it for Central Hudson. Like, what is
15 this? \$159?

16 This is before COVID, this is before
17 Pat Ryan. And he go -- they go -- I said, how are
18 you determining your delivery fees? She could not
19 answer that question. It wasn't based on my usage.
20 It wasn't based on anything.

21 We're just like \$159. I have a 900
22 square foot house. I have copies of these bills
23 going way back. So I'm surprised that people are
24 just noticing this now. I spoke to the man from the
25 Public Service Commission and he said, well -- he

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2 said, you know, electric, and that's not free, like
3 that's a trade, that's like a commodity, that's not -
4 - that's like orange juice and gold.

5 And I said, oh, okay. So I said, have
6 you looked at your bill? Have you noticed? And I
7 don't think he was local. He goes, I don't know, my
8 parents pay. And I called the Daily Dreamer. Like -
9 - I'm like, what? How is this possible that my
10 delivery fee is more than my usage?

11 This is unbelievable. I don't care
12 about estimated billing. I don't care about budget
13 billing. Who is regulating what these people can
14 charge for delivery fees? Okay. If I say my actual
15 -- now, I'm going to get to the fact that I had a
16 non-working meter from August 2020.

17 And I'm going to give you my number.
18 My com -- I have a number assigned by the Public
19 Service Commission. I've called twice. I asked for
20 an extra investigation. I said, I'm not paying the
21 bill. He goes, oh, so you want free electric? I
22 said, they owe me.

23 Not only did I have a non-working
24 meter for two years, it read 888. Thankfully,
25 Central Hudson, because they wanted me to do their

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2 job for them, asked me to photograph it. So I have
3 photographic evidence from August of 2020, until I
4 believe March of 2023.

5 When a woman -- now I have a murder
6 dog. Nobody wants to come in my backyard. She not
7 only -- did she not tell me that she was arriving,
8 she broke through my gate in the backyard. I look
9 out my back porch and there's a woman standing there.

10 I said, what are you doing? Because I
11 literally, -- she could have been attacked. Oh, I'm
12 changing out the meter. I said, but you didn't --
13 oh, I'm allowed to do this. This is our property.
14 We can come on your property at any time we want to.
15 Because we own this meter.

16 So during the time that I was being
17 billed, with a non-working meter that I have
18 photographic evidence of from those dates for two
19 years. One month was an estimated bill, and one
20 month was an actual bill. Yeah. So my question,
21 when does this become criminal? I call the attorney
22 general.

23 If I -- if I, as a business, decide to
24 falsely charge you, tell you I'm doing a meter
25 reading, an actual, because that's what Central

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2 Hudson tells you. One month, we're estimating, one
3 month is actual. So -- okay. Every time they gave
4 me an actual bill on a non-working meter, in my
5 opinion, that's a crime.

6 But apparently, if I did it, if I was
7 stealing from my neighbor, I'm going to jail. Every
8 month. And now they -- I got a bill in my purse for
9 \$4,000. I have a 900 square foot home. Now when I
10 said to them -- again, I'm going to give you the
11 numbers of my -- Jenna Weber was supposed to talk to
12 me.

13 I've spoken to Senator Hinchey's
14 office. I was in regular contact with Jeremiah from
15 Pat Ryan's office. I spoke to Senator Hinchey's
16 office. Isn't that a wonderful guy? He says, well,
17 I can -- I need -- I can get you -- I can be a person
18 with you to talk to Central Hudson, but they're only
19 available, the only person who deals with this, from
20 half a day on Tuesday.

21 That's the only time you can't. So
22 this is my opinion, all right? The delivery fees
23 need to be regulated. And I would normally say to do
24 it based on your usage. But of course, I had no
25 recordable usage for two years.

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2 So I don't know how much electrify,
3 but they're saying, well, you know, it would be based
4 on past bills. My past bills of usage were a 125
5 bucks. Their delivery fee is \$159. So my opinion
6 is, base your -- take 1%, 5% of my usage and charge
7 me that way. Or go across the board.

8 Everybody gets charged 50 bucks a
9 month. But let's -- let's -- give me a reason. Give
10 me an explanation. Plus, what are miscellaneous
11 fees? I'm curious. What is this for? You -- I
12 quote, I don't know. Nobody knows. Yeah. Nobody
13 knows. Like, it's -- so anyway --

14 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I'm -- I'm going to
15 have to ask you to --

16 MS. SOBRADO: Yeah. I -- let me just
17 tell you what my -- this is my case number.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Oh, wait, wait. Okay.
19 Case number, okay. Just don't give us your account
20 number for your own security.

21 MS. SOBRADO: No, I won't. This is my
22 Public Service Commission case number. It's 230497.
23 It was forwarded to, what's her name, Jenna Mauer of
24 Central Hudson on 5/4/2022. And I have never heard
25 from anyone since. Thank you.

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

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Before
4 we get to our speaker, I just want to say, where --
5 where -- we have gone through 16 speakers. That's
6 beside the elected officials. And we have 44
7 speakers signed up.

8 So I just ask, please, try and keep,
9 you know, the time down as much as possible. Again,
10 we're not going to cut you off. We want to hear what
11 you have to say. But we do want to hear from
12 everybody if possible. So Willner.

13 MR. WILLNER: Thank you. I don't want
14 to take a lot of time. So we moved --

15 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: What was your name?

16 MR. WILLNER: Andrew Willner.

17 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: Thank you.

18 MR. WILLNER: I live in Rosendale
19 Park. Been a central -- Central Hudson customer
20 since 2014. When we rebuilt our house, we did what
21 we thought was the correct thing to do. We installed
22 rooftop solar. We have a heat pump in the parts of
23 the house that can't be serviced by our geothermal
24 system.

25 We have a thermal hot water -- solar

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2 hot water system and we -- we use very little
3 electricity based on the utilities that we have.
4 However, we've gone from zero bills some month, zero
5 amounts some months to \$700.

6 And I keep track of what our solar
7 production is, and I try to compare it to the bills
8 that I get from Solar Hudson -- from Central Hudson,
9 and there's no rhyme or reason between the two. So I
10 try to contact Solar Hudson to resolve the problem
11 that I see they're having.

12 Besides the fact that sometimes they
13 read my neighbor's meter and bill me. That's the
14 other -- that was the other thing about this drive by
15 meter reading thing. But here's that -- here's what
16 was interesting. I found out that their solar
17 department is a unicorn. It doesn't exist.

18 And they -- they are the people who
19 they tell you they're who will call you back when you
20 talk to them about your bill if you have solar. So
21 this is a typical conversation. Hi, this is Andrew
22 Willner. This is my account number. And I need to
23 talk to you about a billing issue.

24 And they said, but you have solar, so
25 you have to talk to the solar department. And so I

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2 said, okay, could that person -- could I speak to
3 that person now? Could you transfer me to that
4 person? No. They have to call you back.

5 And of course, nobody's ever called me
6 back. And I investigated on my own, and there was no
7 such thing as the solar department. It's just the
8 way that Central Hudson puts off people who want to
9 contest their bill and ask for it.

10 So they don't -- I agree with
11 everybody who said, no, no increase. As a matter of
12 fact, I think it's time for somebody to go on a perp
13 walk, somebody to face the music for the fraudulent
14 way they've been operating.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. So when
16 I spoke earlier about a shuttle that there are
17 certain people that may have to leave for a shuttle,
18 the shuttle will be leaving at 08:30 p.m. And we
19 have one speaker, Celia Seupel, S-E-U-P-E-L, who can
20 go next.

21 MS. SEUPEL: Oh! Thank you.

22 A.L.J. COSTELLO: And then, if there's
23 anyone else that needs to get that shuttle, again, if
24 you go back to the -- our office of Consumer
25 Service's table and give your name, we can try to

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2 accommodate you. All right. Thank you.

3 MS. SEUPEL: Hi, thank you very much.
4 My name is Celia Seupel. I live in High Falls, a
5 hamlet in the Town of Marbletown. I'd like to say
6 I've been fighting with Central Hudson, and that's
7 why I have two black eyes.

8 But in fact, I just had my eye
9 surgery, so just ignore me. I've -- I've heard such
10 awful stories that are really worse than mine, I just
11 want to add my two cents. I just let them bill my
12 credit card and keep paying them because I can't
13 handle all these sites.

14 And so in the last two years, this is
15 again starting 2021. I was frequently billed \$100
16 miscellaneous. I did get in touch with someone who
17 told me that was because they couldn't read my meter.
18 I said, that's because nobody came over here to read
19 my meter.

20 They said they didn't have access.
21 But they did have access. The meter is right around
22 the back of my house. And I said, please don't do
23 that anymore. You do have access. And finally,
24 someone did come to read the meter.

25 My son was, happened to be there. And

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2 he said, I really don't know where your meter is. So
3 he showed him where it was. I don't think they've
4 been back since then. In the last year, I wasn't
5 billed for about four months. July, August,
6 September, and October.

7 So in November of 2022, I was billed
8 \$996. And then, later in the same month, I was
9 billed \$822 for electric only. I have, you know, I'm
10 an older person. I live on Social Security. I have
11 a 1,800 square foot house. I don't really -- I've
12 not been understanding why my bills are so high.

13 In January of '23, I was billed \$867
14 for that month. In March of '23, I was billed \$795
15 for that month. And then, my bills have been a
16 little bit lower going down, but you know, overall in
17 as bill \$5,500 and basically that comes to \$424 a
18 month that I'm paying for electrical only.

19 And that's about twenty two percent of
20 my social security and most of my income. And I'd
21 just like to point out that I looked up NerdWallet
22 says the -- for 2022, the average bill should be is
23 about \$137 a month for electric.

24 And Forbes in 2023 said the average
25 bill in New York is \$116 a month. Yet here I am

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2 paying \$424 a month for electricity. I don't
3 understand it, and it's really a hardship. Thank
4 you.

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

6 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
7 speaker will be Pat Pellicano, to be followed by
8 Thomas Krisim? Kristan. Okay. I apologize.

9 MR. PELLICANO: Hello.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Hello, there.

11 MR. PELLICANO: Yeah. So speaking of
12 the renter in Kingston, that's about half the
13 population of Kingston, probably 25,000. So I don't
14 have the luxury of choosing, like, how I get my
15 electricity. You know, I can't install heat pumps, I
16 can't install solar panels.

17 I'm just, you know, forced to pay this
18 monopoly, right? That owns this, you know, owns the
19 -- the way that we all get our electricity. Which,
20 as someone stated earlier, is from a Canadian
21 conglomerate, right? And all the comments tonight
22 have just shown that.

23 They're radically disorganized. My
24 bills are so chaotic that like, I tried to -- there's
25 this thing called community solar. It's like, part

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2 of the State, it's like a program through the State,
3 where you can sign up for it so you get, you can,
4 like, determine where your electricity comes from.

5 It comes from solar farms versus, you
6 know, some of the other horrible things that Central
7 Hudson also gets money from. But the billing systems
8 are so chaotic that I was getting credits from, like,
9 months prior.

10 But the reality is that I live with
11 other people, so do so many other renters in town,
12 right?

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Excuse us just one
14 moment.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Can we just ask you,
16 please, in the back, if you could keep it down? A
17 lot of people are giving their comments.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Sorry.

19 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you.

20 MR. PELLICANO: Yeah. So the reality
21 is for renters in Kingston, many of us live with
22 other people at the same time. So in order for us
23 to, you know, have some sort of normalcy with
24 billing, Central Hudson is just not giving it.

25 And it's just shows that their

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2 leadership is horrible. Their customer service is a
3 joke. Trying to do what I could to implement some
4 sort of positive change and sort of like determining
5 where my energy comes from was a failure.

6 Like, I had -- I had to stop doing a
7 thing because I couldn't tell my roommates how much I
8 -- they owed me, or I owed, whatever. So yeah. I'd
9 just like to advocate what everyone said before. Not
10 only should they not get this rate hike because they
11 have failed, and you shouldn't reward such a, you
12 know, a deleterious, you know, service.

13 But it should be, you know, given a
14 decrease, because also in Kingston, this is the first
15 place where we got a, you know, the -- the housing,
16 the Renwick Island board voted for a housing
17 decrease, citing information that is publicly
18 available, right?

19 Wages are stagnant, this company
20 sucks, and the rates they're asking for are a joke.
21 So yeah. A decrease, don't give them what they want.
22 Public power. Thanks for your time.

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

24 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Thomas
25 Kristan, to be followed by Mary Kristan.

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2 MR. KRISTAN: Mary and I can speak.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

4 MR. KRISTAN: I am in a resident in
5 this office. My wife's retired, I work. We've been
6 on the budget plan, budget billing plan for 25 years,
7 as long as we've lived in the county. All I see,
8 each and every bill -- budget bill, besides the fact
9 that one month we redeemed it, one month yesterday,
10 is an increase of 100 bucks on my budget billing.

11 So now I have \$1,000 bill for this
12 upcoming year. I have to pay in addition to my
13 budget billing, which went up \$100. So now I'm
14 paying what it comes down to for a 1,600 square foot
15 house, I have to pay \$1,200 to catch up on my budget
16 billing.

17 I work in customer service, 35 years.
18 If I did anything this people do -- this company do,
19 I would be out of business. I'd be fired. Customer
20 service is awful. We've heard the stories of people
21 waiting on the phone and not getting a call back.
22 Ask my wife.

23 She's been on the phone time and time
24 again. You're asking for a rate increase when you
25 can't deliver your service, it's unconscionable.

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

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
4 speaker will be Barbara Hertel, to be followed by
5 Patrick Conway. Barbara Hertel, and then, Patrick
6 Conway.

7 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: Is there a Barbara
8 Hertel?

9 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

10 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. We'll go to
11 Patrick Conway.

12 MR. CONWAY: Good evening, everybody.
13 Thank you for showing up and support. I'm glad to
14 finally see the State of New York sitting in front of
15 us. Mine is going to be just like everybody else's.
16 I've heard it probably 40 times here this evening
17 saying all the stuff that I've had.

18 Mine started April 28th, 2022. It was
19 at the Central Hudson meeting on May 3rd sponsored by
20 Senator Hinchey, Mr. Ryan, and at that time, Kevin
21 Cahill (ph.). Tonight's a little different, but no,
22 they don't deserve what they think they deserve.

23 They're fraudulent, very fraudulent.
24 I had, just like everybody else bills, double bills,
25 bills that I went back and took my checks from the

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2 bank. And show that they deposit your money, but
3 they don't put it on the bill. I have stacks of
4 that.

5 They will not let you in the door to
6 show it to them. I don't do emails. I don't do
7 computers. And I need support. And all we're
8 hearing from that is yadda, yadda, yadda. Thank you
9 very much.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Charles
12 Sanchis, to be followed by Laurie Wheelock.

13 MR. SANCHIS: My name is Charles
14 Sanchis. I'm here on behalf of the Dutch Village
15 Tenant Association. Dutch Village Apartments is a
16 139 -- well now 140 unit residential apartment
17 complex that houses tenants.

18 I brought a number of bills just to go
19 through, but I don't think I need to be redundant
20 with what everybody shared. I think it's pretty
21 simple. You possess the authority and the power to
22 deny their proposed increase. I think that's pretty
23 simple.

24 With all of the stories of inaccurate
25 billing, with all of the people that can't get a

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2 straight answer, when Central Hudson is owned by
3 Fortis, which in 2022 had a revenue of
4 \$11,000,000,000 and total assets of 64,000,000,000 as
5 of June 30th, 2023.

6 It seems pretty evident that Central
7 Hudson has the financial backing through their parent
8 company to make the changes that need to be made.
9 Most people are willing to pay their bills when they
10 get what they're paying for.

11 I don't think anyone wants to be here
12 this late at night. Nor do you want to be here this
13 late. And I don't know how many meetings you
14 actually have to attend and be the punching bag,
15 unfortunately. The human spirit is creative and
16 powerful.

17 And at some point, it won't be
18 contained, and people will take ownership and resolve
19 this issue if you don't stop the increase. Thank
20 you.

21 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Okay.
22 Laurie Wheelock, to be followed by Chelsea Villalba.

23 MS. VILLALBA: Villalba.

24 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Villalba. Okay.

25 MS. WHEELLOCK: Good evening and thank

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2 you. My name is Laurie Wheelock. I go by she her
3 pronouns. I'm the executive director of the Public
4 Utility Law Project. We go by PULP for short. I
5 want to start by thanking you.

6 Not only were you in Kingston today,
7 but you were in Poughkeepsie. And yesterday you were
8 in Catskill, and you were also in Newburgh. So we've
9 been on the road together. PULP was there for all
10 four hearings. We've been sitting in the back taking
11 notes.

12 Our organization is what I like to
13 describe small but mighty. There's ten of us. We
14 work with the mission to educate, advocate, and
15 litigate on behalf of New York's low-income utility
16 customers. We do electric, gas, water, and telecom
17 work for the entire State.

18 And I want to thank my staff of 10 for
19 everything they've done over the last two years,
20 because it's been hard. And the faces in this room
21 reflect that. To all the constituent service
22 members, who are all the elected officials, to all
23 the non-profits, to all the churches, to the Office
24 of Consumer Services, to Lisa over at Central Hudson.

25 We have done our best, but it's hard.

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2 And the stories that we're hearing, the last four
3 hearings, are exactly the stories that PULP is still
4 getting through our hotline. But I want to start
5 with a little history. I want to go back two years.

6 Two years ago, we would get maybe one
7 or two calls a week from Central Hudson customers.
8 And then, September 2021 happened, when the billing
9 system upgrade occurred. We were hit with an
10 onslaught of calls. And first it started with all of
11 a sudden, there was these changes between the
12 estimated and the actual bill.

13 And there were significant
14 fluctuations. We couldn't figure out what was going
15 on. We literally could not. We had every single
16 staff person creating Excels and checking, and it
17 just didn't make sense to us. And then, more things
18 were happening.

19 Multiple bills over the same period of
20 time, large auto withdrawals from bank accounts. All
21 the stories you've heard tonight are things that we
22 heard and we saw. So we jumped into action. Along
23 with the elected officials, we called for an
24 investigation in early 2022, which we thank the
25 department for doing.

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2 In March 2022, the department began
3 that investigation. In May, the people of Ulster
4 County and the elected officials organized their own
5 hearing. PULP asked the public to share stories to
6 help us in the work we were doing.

7 And many of those faces are here
8 tonight and they've just grown. So thank you for
9 that. Still troubled, we wrote to the Commission in
10 July 2022 with specific request to be considered
11 during the investigation, one of which still bothers
12 me, which is the portal between Central Hudson and
13 the Department of Social Services in each of the
14 counties.

15 Whether or not financial assistance is
16 being properly transferred between the counties and
17 the company is a great concern. Based on all of our
18 concerns, based on our stories that we were hearing
19 in December 2022, we filed a motion for a prudency
20 review and a penalty assessment.

21 Because we were concerned and we felt
22 that we needed the State to step up and look to see
23 whether or not the company should be penalized.
24 Later that month, the department staff issued their
25 investigatory report, and they did a phenomenal job.

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2 It's 59 pages long, it's thorough, and
3 just one section I'm going to read tonight. From the
4 department staff is the problem Central Hudson
5 experience were not merely fleeting minor issues
6 associated with system stabilization. They were
7 significant and long lasting, and the direct result
8 of a lack of preparation, testing, training,
9 staffing, communication, and candor.

10 Again, I thank the department for
11 their work on that. They did a phenomenal job, but
12 now we need more. And so we request that the Public
13 Service Commission take up the order to show cause,
14 began a prudence review and look into penalties.

15 Also occurring at the same time as
16 this investigation, we wanted to recognize there's a
17 Management and Operations audit that's been ongoing.
18 There's also been the recent placement of the billing
19 monitor at the company in the agreement, which,
20 again, we thank you for.

21 There's also a Class Action lawsuit
22 which has been mentioned. There are many, many
23 moving pieces to this puzzle, but the problem is
24 there's been no final resolution and there's still
25 issues happening. So to stand here as PULP, who's

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2 getting stories every single day, and also be a party
3 to this rate case, it's extremely difficult for us.

4 We are working on our testimony right
5 now. Our staff has spent six weeks going through
6 every single panel. Coming up with what our
7 positions would be, but every single day, I can't sit
8 there and think this is going to be a normal rate
9 case.

10 Some of the issues you'll see in our
11 testimony, which is due on November 21st, is concerns
12 about the basis for the revenue requirement. The
13 bill impacts themselves, which have been discussed
14 tonight. Inadequacy surrounding proposals relating
15 to the disadvantaged communities, and specifically on
16 whether or not the company is able to do data to
17 determine where those disadvantage -- disadvantaged
18 communities are.

19 And last, our promises that were made
20 in the last rate order. I'm not going to go into
21 each of them, but one that we are investigating right
22 now, thanks to the help of Communities for Local
23 Power, who's also a party. Are the promises to
24 expand on Spanish language customer support channels.

25 Again, we will be putting in our

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2 testimony on November 21st. But we are significantly
3 considering every single legal option under the
4 Public Service Law. With that, I'll conclude that
5 the basics of the Public Service Law, our principle
6 that came up during last week's session safe and
7 reliable service at just and reasonable rates.

8 But standing here tonight after four
9 public hearings, PULP doesn't feel that there's
10 anything just or reasonable about what's going on
11 with this rate case. And we stand here, deeply
12 concerned about what we're hearing. So thank you
13 again for coming. Thank you for the Commissioner
14 here. We appreciate you.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Chelsea
16 Villalba? Sorry.

17 MS. VILLALBA: Villalba.

18 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Villalba. I'll get
19 it right sooner or later. And then, to be followed
20 by Wayne Spanier.

21 MS. VILLALBA: My name is Chelsea
22 Villalba. I'm a community social worker and I'm in
23 opposition of Central Hudson's proposed high pay
24 hikes. Funding the continued usage of fossil fuels
25 and increasing the profits of complicit climate

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2 criminals is not in line with C.L.P.s or New York
3 State's guidelines for addressing the climate
4 disaster.

5 And raising the price of an essential
6 service during a time of record economic hardship is
7 downright cruel and inhumane. I've lived in Kingston
8 since 2021. In 2022, I was a full-time student and
9 part time worker when I received several Central
10 Hudson bills over \$400, when I made -- when I had to
11 pay a \$500 rent share and made around \$800 a month.
12 For those who can math, it isn't mathing. There is
13 no better business bureau for this utility, so the
14 Public Service Commission needs to get its act
15 together and stop normalizing.

16 Stop normalizing the funding of
17 subpar, planet killing corporations that have already
18 been ruled by the State to be subpar and are still,
19 to this day, messing up people's budgeted resources.
20 To everyone else in here, I say let's explore our
21 options for energy alternatives.

22 Signing up for community solar
23 programs, supporting research that eliminates or
24 lessens our reliance on fossil fuels. These are
25 things we can do together. Either way, the people

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2 here are evidence that corporations like Central
3 Hudson will not remain in existence in their
4 monopolized power for much longer.

5 I smell a boycott in the air.
6 Consider who will shoulder these hikes? People who
7 are already struggling in a well-documented housing
8 crisis, who can barely make rents, cannot afford an
9 increase, and dirty energy bill.

10 I really hope you all, people who are
11 making over \$170,000 to \$200,000 a year after a quick
12 Google search confirms, make the right decision for
13 the majority of people who don't make anywhere near
14 that. Who here makes less than \$200,000 a year?

15 THE AUDIENCE: Everyone.

16 MS. VILLALBA: Every person involved
17 in the oil and gas industry should learn the lesson
18 that it's no longer a money-making field. You will
19 lose profits. What are you going to do to ensure
20 that Central Hudson remediates the bills of people
21 who aren't here, who don't speak English, who are not
22 aware of all of the information that we have from our
23 experiences?

24 Give us a decrease and give us
25 publicly owned utilities. You asked for respect at

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2 the beginning of this meeting, earn it. Thank you.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Wayne
4 Spanier, to be followed by Scott Widmeyer.

5 THE REPORTER: This will be our 27th
6 speaker.

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. Wayne
8 Spanier? Scott Widmayer? Okay. Claudia Forest?

9 MS. FOREST: Hi, I'm Claudia Forest.
10 I've lived in Ulster County for 33 years. And I've
11 been a Kingston City resident for seven. I'm self-
12 employed. I live in an apartment. My landlord
13 before I moved in had already installed heat pumps or
14 keep an A.C. for efficiency purposes.

15 I keep track of all my bills. I'm a
16 conservationist. I never have my heat above 65 in
17 the winter and 55 at night. In the summer, I use
18 window fans to avoid using my A.C. I can keep my
19 bills low. From the previous winter to the -- well,
20 two winters ago, to the last winter my bills
21 increased and there was no increase in my usage.

22 I could compare my bills, I kept them
23 on paper, as well as utilizing the online billing
24 resources. So after my bills started increasing, I
25 started reaching out to Central Hudson, repeated

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2 calls, same experience as everybody else. They
3 didn't take my calls. I was on hold for hours,
4 disconnected, left messages, no one called me back.

5 I was told to contact Kevin Kale's
6 office. I was in contact with Lauren and Michael who
7 were very helpful at Kale's office. They, 15 times
8 advocated for me to Central Hudson, no one contacted
9 me. I had three email exchanges with Pat Ryan's
10 office. No one contacted me from Central Hudson.

11 Finally, I contacted the Public
12 Service Commission. They assigned me a case number.
13 Finally, a Central Hudson rep contacted me. Someone
14 named Kathy. I had six calls with her. I went over
15 my bills multiple times, trying to have her explain
16 to me what each charge was. I also was confused by
17 the service charge.

18 I said my bill is, you know, X number
19 of hundreds of dollars. Why is the equivalent amount
20 charged to me in terms of service delivery fees?
21 That's incomprehensible to me and outrageous. Yes, I
22 encountered the problem with estimated readings
23 versus actual readings. There was a discrepancy. We
24 went over that over and over again.

25 Finally, she said maybe there's a

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2 problem with your meter. I -- I'll send a meter
3 reader out. Apparently, they don't actually read
4 your meters, they drive by and they take a -- a scan
5 of it. The meter on the apartment building is
6 visible, it's accessible by scanning but they sent
7 someone in person.

8 I was present. The person read the
9 meter. They said it's not accurate. We're going to
10 send a meter evaluator. That didn't happen.
11 Finally, an -- an evaluator came, read the meter. I
12 was present. They said it was running fast. It
13 should be replaced. They made an appointment to
14 replace, but that person didn't come.

15 They made another appointment and
16 finally the meter was replaced. All during this time
17 I was paying a minimum of \$100 a month towards my
18 bills because I didn't want my credit rating
19 destroyed based on the fact that I had this
20 outstanding balance.

21 What else? Everybody else has said
22 something that I probably would just repeat. Just
23 the complete sheer frustration, the aggravation, the
24 inconvenience.

25 Finally, they agreed to compensate me

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2 and, you know, kind of credit my account by \$100
3 which didn't really bring it back to what it should
4 have been -- those adjustments don't begin to make up
5 for our inconvenience on top of all the exorbitant,
6 outrageous overcharging.

7 Let's see. I think I've covered all
8 my points. Basically, no. No rate increase, rate
9 decrease, we should have access to reasonable utility
10 costs. Electricity should be one of them. This is
11 outrageous and I think it should be dealt with.
12 Thank you.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Can I
14 ask you, do you have your case number and are you
15 willing to --

16 MS. FOREST: I have it at home. I
17 didn't bring my paperwork. I can send it in.

18 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. That -- that
19 would be great.

20 MS. FOREST: Where would I send it to?

21 A.L.J. MORENO: I can give you the
22 information.

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Yes, will give you -
24 - she will give you some information. Okay. Next -
25 -

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2 MS. FOREST: I didn't bring my bills
3 or my case number, it's like history.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

5 MS. FOREST: Thank you everybody who
6 spoke tonight and stayed here, and it's late and
7 we're tired and we're angry and it's frustrating.

8 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

9 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Leland
10 Radouanovic. And I apologize.

11 MR. RADOUANOVIC: That's close enough.

12 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. And then, the
13 next speaker will be Phil -- Philippe Cosme.

14 MR. COSME: Very good.

15 MR. RADOUANOVIC: My name is Leland
16 Radouanovic. I drove an hour to get here from
17 Hopewell Junction because my session was in the
18 middle of the day unfortunately. You know, I worked
19 hard to attain the American dream.

20 I recently bought a house. I work
21 from home, so I do use a lot of energy. My office
22 dissolved, so it's something that I have to do. I'm
23 an aspiring father. And, you know, my community and
24 my family cannot afford these rate hikes.

25 I asked the Commission to deny this

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2 hike. And in fact, implement a rate decrease. The
3 reality is we're given no choice in these services.
4 And when I look around, I actually wonder what it
5 would look like if we collectively stopped paying our
6 bills until they reduced their rates. Thank you.

7 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

8 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Philippe
9 Cosme, to be followed by Tait Simpson?

10 MR. COSME: Good evening. I'm 72
11 years old. I've been buying electricity since 1972.
12 And back then, they used to have people come into
13 your basement and physically read the meters. And if
14 they were unable to get in your basement, they left
15 you a little postcard and you could fill it out
16 yourself and mail it in.

17 Okay. Never had a problem with that.
18 Oh, by the way, we paid every other month. Never had
19 a problem with that. Then, a few years back and I
20 won't go back to where the Public Service Commission
21 deregulated Central Hudson by the cheapest rates in
22 the area and the best service, they had to sell off
23 all their assets. But they kept the hydroelectric
24 plants.

25 And then, a few years back, the Public

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2 Service Commission told Central Hudson that they had
3 to send out monthly bills. Every other bill was to
4 be estimated. Every bill I got estimated required
5 not only just two sheets of paper but two envelopes,
6 plus the mailing charge. Why? Okay.

7 Now, I know that some people have
8 problems with budget billing whether that works or
9 not, I don't know. But I -- there was -- there was
10 no provision for people who can pay every other month
11 and wanted to pay every other month. And I wish the
12 politicians would have went last so they could hear
13 this.

14 When they're pushing for monthly
15 readings and you talk about burning fossil fuels, how
16 are these people going to go and collect that
17 information every month? Okay. You can't have
18 everything. Go back to every other month for people
19 who want every other month. And, you know, what take
20 a dollar off their bill for the money that they would
21 save for not having to mail that bill to them. Okay.
22 That's one reason they wanted a rate increase. The
23 second reason they wanted a rate increase is because
24 of all the unpaid bills because of the pandemic and
25 because of their own policy after the pandemic where

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2 they chose to extend that for another year.

3 I know of a particular case and I gave
4 it to Michelle Hinchey's office and I haven't heard
5 back, actually, it's over there. She was over there
6 but her office is over there. They have not paid
7 their bill for three years. And they have a fully
8 electric facility. And their heat is at 75 degrees
9 and two air conditioners going all summer long.

10 Okay. The heat in my house is 60
11 degrees. And I don't know what my square footage is.
12 All I know is I don't use that much electricity and I
13 try not to use. Anyways, it's late and I'm tired.
14 They're making this problem where they're not getting
15 paid.

16 Okay. If they shut the electricity
17 off when they weren't getting paid, we would not be
18 paying for all these people that are not paying their
19 bill. And by the way, some of this stuff on the bill
20 I found interesting because I didn't know what it
21 was.

22 So I looked on it on the computer,
23 because I wanted to know what a miscellaneous charges
24 are. Now, I don't even want to answer the question,
25 who gave them permission to do this, or is this just

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2 some way they could get around having to ask for a
3 rate increase?

4 Because I don't remember all these
5 charges before but anyways the miscellaneous charges
6 is to pay Central Hudson for the people who don't pay
7 the bill. Yeah. So you know, they're crying on this
8 end that we're not getting paid but they're getting
9 paid from us. You know, I pay for what I use.

10 Why should I pay for somebody who not
11 only isn't paying for what they use but they're
12 abusing what they're using. Also -- you can clap,
13 okay, or you can laugh. I like when a politician
14 tells a joke and we laugh like that one.

15 And then, there's another one in here.
16 Which, you know, you got to be solar -- solar panels
17 that go into a special meter that has to try and
18 translate what they're getting from here and try and
19 plug it into the system. And those meters cost extra
20 money.

21 That's what one of these charges are
22 on your Central Hudson bill. Okay. So I think
23 people who are saving money having solar panels
24 should pay for the special meter, not for me who
25 can't afford solar panels. And I have to pay for

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2 them to -- you get the message.

3 So as far as -- oh, estimated billing.
4 Another reason why I don't want estimated billing
5 because I had -- it seemed every month that it was
6 estimated, it was a little higher than it normally
7 would have been when I read my meter. I have no
8 problem reading my meter, they're easy now.

9 And then, the next month it would even
10 out. But for some reason this month my gas went up.
11 Last year's estimated was 14 units. This current one
12 is 94. I went down and read my meter and it was a
13 100 units off.

14 I haven't called Central Hudson yet,
15 I'm going to wait for the next bill to see if it
16 evens out. But in the meantime, I hope you --
17 because a lot of the costs, I was under -- under the
18 impression. There was a time, by the way, when
19 Central Hudson feared the Public Service Commission.

20 When I wanted Central Hudson to do
21 something, I'd just tell them I would call the Public
22 Service Commission and they would snap to it and
23 answer me. I don't think they have that anymore.
24 The other problem I have -- and I'm sorry if I'm
25 taking too much time.

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2 But Central Hudson decided or you guys
3 helped decide, first, Central Hudson replaced all the
4 gas lines in Kingston and in Saugerties, there's
5 probably other places, but those two, I'm familiar
6 with.

7 Central Hudson wanted to do it in --
8 there's a rough number, it's roughly over a four year
9 period. They told me that Central Hudson, and that
10 Public Service Commission told them no, they had to
11 do it in two years.

12 Okay. And if anybody experienced what
13 Central Hudson did to our roads and they're not
14 responding to that. One other thing, I try to be
15 understanding and it's very hard to hire good people
16 anymore.

17 And I understand the problem Central
18 Hudson -- Central Hudson has trying to hire competent
19 people and enough people to do their job. But again,
20 they need to be more efficient and let that reflect -
21 -

22 THE AUDIENCE: They should probably
23 pay them more.

24 MR. COSME: Pardon me?

25 THE AUDIENCE: They should probably

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2 pay them more.

3 THE AUDIENCE: That's right.

4 MR. COSME: No, no, no. We would have
5 to pay them more if they paid them more. Okay. It
6 doesn't come from nowhere, guys. Somebody has to pay
7 these bills. So anytime you ask for something and
8 something you don't want to do, we got to pay for it.

9 I'm a senior citizen. I've been
10 paying all my life but stop asking for stuff unless
11 you want to pay for it. And then, only charge the
12 people that ask for it. Thank you.

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

14 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Tait
15 Simpson will be followed by Andrianna Natsuules.

16 THE AUDIENCE: What number?

17 A.L.J. COSTELLO: We have 34 and 35.
18 Tait Simpson, Andrianna Natsuules. Okay.

19 MS. NATSUULES: Good evening, thank
20 you. Congratulations on getting my name. I'm
21 Andrianna Natsuules. And I'm a resident of
22 Bloomington. I'd also really like to thank you for
23 recording all of our comments.

24 This must be an exhausting evening for
25 you. So yes, just like everybody else you've heard,

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2 I ask the Public Service Commission to uphold the
3 integrity of the Public Service Commission and listen
4 to the people that you've heard today.

5 I'm assuming that you've heard many
6 other similar messages in your other hearings. So I
7 ask you to uphold your own integrity and listen to us
8 and prevent any more rate hikes from Central Hudson
9 and instead implement a rate decrease.

10 I also find it really alarming that
11 this is happening at a time when we're moving more
12 and more towards renewable energies. And it seems to
13 me that this corporation is trying to skim the top
14 and find other ways of reaping profits as we're
15 turning towards solar energy and other alternative
16 energies that are meant to benefit everybody.

17 I find that just so questionable. And
18 based on everything else that I've heard and I've
19 seen, it doesn't surprise me if they would try any
20 trick and criminal act to pad their pockets. So all
21 I have to say is, you know, it's just unacceptable to
22 allow this private corporate monopoly of an absolute
23 essential need.

24 And frankly, Central Hudson has got to
25 go and be replaced by an accountable community based

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2 public utility. Thank you.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Harry
4 Karnaghan, to be followed by Michael Tierney. Harry
5 Karnaghan?

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Sir, would you can
7 prefer the --

8 A.L.J. COSTELLO: You can --

9 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: You can use that mic
10 right there.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: You can use that
12 microphone.

13 MR. KARNAGHAN: Thank you. I was born
14 in Kingston, back in 41. And I'm a ... It doesn't
15 seem to be on. And we moved down of Florida because
16 of health problems. And in Florida, Florida Power
17 and Light, if you didn't pay your bill, they cut you
18 off.

19 And I know that by a fact that's, you
20 know, I'm not going to go -- go into details of why
21 it was, but the attorney -- so we went to an attorney
22 and he said man, you've got a case I could make
23 millions on this.

24 The problem is, they cut you off, and
25 then, they take your house if you -- you didn't pay

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2 the bill, and then, you be out in a rent. I moved to
3 Michigan in retirement, bought a nice home, three
4 bedroom home. And my summer bill was around 55 and
5 60.

6 A larger bill was 75 to 80. I come
7 here and it's over a 100 in the summertime. That
8 wasn't my problem. I moved in ... house on the
9 second floor is the first apartment. And it's a
10 beautiful apartment. It's perfect.

11 I had to move, I had a reason. It
12 wasn't ... So I got an apartment. And by the time I
13 moved into a two-bedroom apartment, and the bill
14 started fluctuating. So I called -- and the lady on
15 the phone was very pleasant.

16 And I -- I don't know what's happened
17 to the people here that always got people that they
18 couldn't converse with, but I had no problem
19 conversing on the phone. They ... New York. So I
20 brought a -- I took an apartment, same complex.

21 And that's when it happened. My bill
22 was from 22 to 26. And then, up to 174. And I said
23 well, here's two bills with \$4 difference, so the
24 last bill being 126, I paid 130. And the next bill
25 was a 190 something. I brought the bills with me.

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2 And -- so I called them very nicely.

3 She said well, back when you lived at

4 (unintelligible) Street, during July, I said wait a

5 minute, I mean January, she said, I said wait a

6 minute, I -- I moved in when I was in -- in July, I

7 didn't -- I wasn't even in the State in January.

8 So what we figured out was the people

9 who were renovating the building, the -- the house,

10 the electric company took that part and added it up

11 to my bill as an estimate. And they were like you

12 can't do that and I said, yeah, I agree, you can't do

13 that.

14 So back in September 23rd, Kingston

15 library had a meeting, so I went. And unfortunately,

16 I had an accident with my arm when I was moving some

17 stuff from one apartment to the other and I had to

18 leave early to go to New York to figure out what's

19 wrong.

20 But I got my statement through. I --

21 I couldn't understand. I thought at the beginning

22 that it was for estimating but it was something

23 completely (unintelligible). They talked about all

24 kinds of 90 percent this and 15 percent that and it

25 just threw me all off.

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2 So I came -- told me about this
3 meeting, so this is why I'm here tonight. She told
4 me yesterday, late in the afternoon. And by the time
5 I called my friends it was kind of late. So this
6 morning, around 10 o'clock, I hit my neighbor with
7 it.

8 I went up and down Grover. And then,
9 I went up and down West O'Reilly Street. And I
10 talked to my neighbors and they're nice, nice
11 neighbors. Make me feel more at home than here in
12 Kingston, and I'm on a fixed income. I'm very, very
13 fortunate to have money left over at the end of the
14 month.

15 And I do not want someone taking that
16 extra money away from me unnecessarily because I like
17 to help people. When I was visiting here in April of
18 '21, I met a lady with three children. They were
19 going by me and I was going to go in for breakfast.
20 And they hit me because they were pushing a buggy
21 this high with stuff.

22 And I could tell they need -- they
23 needed help. So I caught up with them. I went say,
24 can you -- I will give you something for God so he
25 can help you? And the little boy couldn't have been

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2 no more than two and a half years old, looked up and
3 said, thank you, sir. I said, no, thank you, Jesus.

4 This is what I'm being robbed from --
5 from these people that are doing our bills crazily.
6 I'm -- I'm -- I'm frustrated. And I appreciate you
7 giving -- giving us the voice tonight and thank you
8 for being here and I hope this will get to someone's
9 ears for a change for a little while.

10 This has been going, I was told last
11 year but this estimating has been going on for -- for
12 a long time. And here it is a year later and we're
13 still in it. Oh, there's another thing. I've been
14 watching the news.

15 And in -- in Washington they say,
16 well, this department hasn't been doing their job.
17 This department hasn't been doing their job. So why
18 don't we take some money away from them and make them
19 do their job.

20 So why can't we -- since we don't lose
21 our electricity like Florida, why don't we hold back
22 our money and make them feel the pinch?

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
24 speaker is Michael Tierney, to be followed by
25 Salvator Recibon.

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2 MR. RECIBON: It's okay, okay.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

4 MR. TIERNEY: Hi, everybody. Thank
5 you, Commissioners. I was going to submit my written
6 comments but in my experience policy makers don't
7 read written comments.

8 So I am speaking to share my
9 dissatisfaction with Central Hudson gas and electric
10 and urge the Public Service Commission to deny the
11 proposed rate increase requested by the company which
12 would amount to an increase of 16 percent for gas --
13 for electric customers and 19 percent for gas
14 customers beginning in July 2024.

15 I believe that Central Hudson is not
16 delivering on its obligation as a publicly regulated
17 utility to provide adequate service and timely
18 support to the 300,000 electric and 78,000 natural
19 gas customers in its Hudson Valley service region.
20 In summer 2021, Central Hudson attempted to update
21 its billing software.

22 And through mismanagement and inaction
23 led to thousands of ratepayers receiving inaccurate
24 bills in the hundreds of thousands of dollars,
25 automatic withdrawals from customer accounts for

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2 obviously incorrect bills.

3 And when customers attempted to
4 address these concerns with Central Hudson, the only
5 offer -- the only help offered by the company was to
6 arrange payment plans for these fraudulent bills
7 rather than acknowledge and address the issue.

8 This erroneous billing error became so
9 widespread that in March 2022, your Commission, the
10 Public Service Commission announced that it had
11 opened an investigation into these practices by the
12 company. Ultimately, finding in December of that
13 year that Central Hudson understood the magnitude of
14 these issues, yet continued to take customer money
15 for faulty bills.

16 Investigators for your Commission
17 stated that system transition problems were
18 foreseeable and avoidable, yet negligent and reckless
19 action on the part of decision makers led to
20 disastrous outcome for many Central Hudson customers.

21 While the company still has not fully
22 corrected all these issues and it claims to be
23 phasing out estimated billing practices. As of
24 August 2023, Central Hudson reported that there were
25 approximately 65,000 ratepayers who are in arrears

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2 and facing threats of shut off.

3 Raising these rates will only further
4 this financial burden on working families,
5 potentially leading to situations where families must
6 choose between heating their homes and paying their
7 rent.

8 In the face of systemic mismanagement
9 and inaction in rectifying ratepayer bills, combined
10 with the volumes of customers currently unable to pay
11 their bills, I feel that the only course of action
12 for the Public Service Commission is to reject any
13 rate hike request from Central Hudson.

14 And just to go off script for a little
15 bit, my name is Michael Tierney. I'm one of the
16 tenant representatives of the Kingston Rent
17 Guidelines Board. I was in -- we represent 1,200
18 units approximately 4,000 city residents.

19 I was in your position last year when
20 we heard from hundreds of -- of people who said that
21 their landlords were raising their rates by 50
22 percent, 60 percent, 70 percent, 300 percent in some
23 instances. We took that human derived data and made
24 that decision.

25 Though we were appointed, we made that

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2 independent decision. Though you were appointed by a
3 Governor that takes money from fossil fuel companies,
4 you were appointed to make a decision that will
5 benefit all of us as ratepayers. I hope you vote
6 against any increase -- any increase. Thank you.

7 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

8 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. RECIBON: What he said.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Can you --

12 MR. RECIBON: So --.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Please state your
14 name again for the record.

15 MR. RECIBON: Sure, sir.

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

17 MR. RECIBON: Salvator Recibon. I
18 live in (unintelligible). I'm a gardener but I pay
19 taxes. I've been here for 19 years. We opened up --
20 we bought an old farmhouse, made a bed and breakfast
21 out of it. It's been -- it's been nice. First year,
22 I was there, we had a -- we had an ice storm in '04.

23 I'm sorry, '07, we had an ice storm.
24 Tore the pole down, tore my power off. And after it
25 all was over, I called Central Hudson to pay me back

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2 for the wires that I had to pay to put back up from
3 the pole. Says, oh, that's your responsibility. He
4 says, no, the pole was rotten.

5 But they didn't -- they didn't budge.
6 But that was the old regime. Everything this --
7 these people said and the people that have left have
8 said are -- are so true. And if you as a group of --
9 of public servants can work for us, help us, we know
10 you get paid, that's your job.

11 I don't care what you make. You
12 shouldn't care what I make. But our money is
13 hardworking money. I'm a chef by profession. And I
14 became a farmer because I injured my shoulder. But
15 this can't continue. This has been going on and on.

16 I'm one of the lucky ones. Out of
17 these 100 plus people, I've never gotten estimates.
18 They did have a problem with my -- my -- my -- my
19 reader or whatever they call that thing.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Meter.

21 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: Meter.

22 THE REPORTER: Meter.

23 MR. TIERNEY: The -- the meter. But
24 they put an automatic reader. A guy goes by with a -
25 - with a gun and scans it. I've never had a problem.

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2 But that was the first time, I never realized the
3 amount of money these companies make and they're
4 charging money for going through the wires to the
5 delivery line. It makes no sense.

6 But I just want to speak what I feel.
7 And if anything, electricity should be free. And
8 there's one -- there's one thing. Since they shut
9 down Indian Point and all the nuclear facilities.
10 And I understand why they did that, that's cool.

11 But that was paying -- giving us
12 electric at really, really great rates. And ever
13 since we removed them, this is what we've had. Thank
14 you.

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

16 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Next
17 speaker is Kadie Acosta, to be followed by Taylor
18 Seupel.

19 MR. SEUPEL: Seupel.

20 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Seupel.

21 MS. ACOSTA: Good evening. My name is
22 Kadie Acosta, and I just want to start with saying
23 thank you for coming and thank you everybody else. I
24 live in Ravena. I work in Schodack. I didn't make
25 the meeting in my town, so I came here today.

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2 I live at 111 Biechman Road in Ravena.
3 My phone number is 508- XXX-XXXX. I am begging for
4 help. The American dream is to get married, buy a
5 house. My husband and I bought our house in
6 September of 2019. Before that, we lived
7 (unintelligible). Never once was our bill more than
8 250.

9 We bought our house. My husband has a
10 business. It was a swimming pool company. He's
11 working right now. We have 1500 square feet with the
12 garage. I have a wood stove for heat and my bill two
13 days ago, \$2,000. \$1200 in delivery fees.

14 I am begging you, you need to do
15 something for the people. I cannot do this. Many
16 people can't. \$26,000 was a bill I received in June.
17 I had six bills. \$26,000, that's half of what I
18 make. My father is diagnosed with cancer last year,
19 we had to move him in. I called and begged and
20 begged for help.

21 I know, I -- I have a master's in
22 Mathematics. I don't understand this. It doesn't
23 make sense. I begged for help. The people are
24 nasty, who work for you. And I -- I get it. They
25 get people bitching and screaming and hating them.

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2 But when I say, what do I do? I get,
3 pay your bill. Well, if I don't, it gets shut off.
4 My father was in the hospital for two weeks last --
5 in September, two weeks. My husband worked 16 hour a
6 day. 6 a.m., he's still working now.

7 I was at work, my father, I can -- two
8 days ago, \$2,000. No one was home. The heat's not
9 on. I've have a wood stove. I never once turned my
10 heat on in three years and you want to raise the
11 rates?

12 Please come to my house, you have my
13 address. Please speak to us, explain to me how you
14 honestly feel that it's okay to do this to people.
15 Because I can promise you, if any one of you had this
16 bill every month, something is different.

17 So please, I'm asking you, you can't
18 raise it. I need my money back, and so does half the
19 people here. So please do something. Because as of
20 right now, I have a \$12,000 balance. And I get told
21 every month, pay your bill. So thank you.

22 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Taylor Seupel?

24 MR. SEUPEL: Seupel.

25 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Seupel, and to be

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2 followed by Margaret Viva.

3 MS. VEVE: Veve.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Veve. Okay. I
5 apologize.

6 MR. SEUPEL: Good evening. Thank you
7 for being here. I'm speaking to you with a deep fear
8 and true belief that what I say will fall on deaf
9 ears. And if not deaf ears, then on powerless ears,
10 on ears that will be met with cowardice to do
11 something about this situation.

12 My name is Taylor Seupel. I'm a
13 resident of Ulster County in High Falls, New York.
14 I'm a registered Republican. I believe that this is
15 a bipartisan issue. I know that you are appointed
16 officials, but I would hope that you would look
17 forward in your career on the decisions that you make
18 today.

19 In 2021 C.E.O. David Hutchins'
20 compensation was \$5,444,480. The previous C.E.O.
21 made \$10,100,700 -- 179,100 including stock holdings.
22 I believe that the monopoly that is Central Hudson is
23 a direct result of legislation passed by New York
24 State.

25 I am not legally allowed to create my

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2 own electricity. I can't buy solar panels and plug
3 them into my house. I have to -- I have to use
4 Central Hudson as a servicer. I believe that it's
5 unconstitutional to require the people to pay for
6 electricity from a business.

7 If you take Obamacare, for instance,
8 it was -- it was considered unconstitutional to have
9 peoples pay and sign up through the marketplace. And
10 it -- I believe it's the same for this monopoly
11 that's been created.

12 I also believe that the -- the
13 conditions that have caused this business to be
14 created have -- excuse me. Let me just refer to my
15 notes. A -- a capitalist enterprise's objective is
16 to extract as much wealth as humanly possible from
17 the payees.

18 We're met with a situation where we're
19 at the mercy of this company that wants to extracts
20 as much money from us as possible. That's not fair.
21 That's not a good capitalist system. And frankly,
22 it's -- it's causing the ruin of America, in my
23 opinion.

24 That these -- these -- that -- that
25 these utilities that are -- that are of a public

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2 benefit that people need and required our -- for-
3 profit organizations shouldn't be for profit. It --
4 it -- it creates a scenario that -- that causes, you
5 know, unfair. There's no competition. There's no
6 ability for people to seek alternatives.

7 I have a friend who has solar energy.
8 And our brother, he doesn't have solar energy, he
9 invested in solar panels. But he can't get Central
10 Hudson to come over and flip the switch, to give him
11 the electricity in which -- for the solar panels that
12 he invested. I believe that we need laws that cause
13 real -- real change.

14 I think there should be laws. For
15 instance, take this -- take this -- this town,
16 Massena. They have a public utility, electric. It
17 took them seven years after passing the vote to get
18 that because there was lawsuit, after lawsuit, after
19 lawsuit.

20 And these companies that are giants
21 are able to pour all their revenue and their earnings
22 into fighting these legal battles. To them, it's a
23 tax write off. To the people, that's bread. That's
24 -- that's what they're living on.

25 And so they can't fight these

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2 companies, so there needs to -- there needs to be
3 laws put in place to make public trials of limited
4 amount of money that can be put into these public
5 trials. There should be public defenders involved
6 and public prosecutors involved, not private.

7 And again, I don't know if you guys
8 can do anything about this. And, you know, I -- I --
9 I have to have a sense of humor about talking to you
10 because, you know, I -- I don't really know if
11 there's anything that you can do.

12 And even if you wanted to, and pass it
13 on to someone else, you know, the cowardice that you
14 would face. The fact that so much of our political
15 sphere is run by private interest money needs to
16 change. There needs to be prison sentences for
17 politicians who take private interest money and then
18 legislate on their behalf.

19 They need to go to prison because what
20 you end up in -- with is an unfair situation where
21 people are starving. Thanks for your time.

22 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

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

24 MS. VEVE: Could you -- you said
25 Margaret Veve?

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2 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I did say, yes. And
3 please just state your name for the record again.

4 MS. VEVE: Yeah, I --

5 A.L.J. COSTELLO: And the next speaker
6 will be Eric -- Eric Rowles.

7 MS. VEVE: My name is Margaret Veve.
8 I live in New Paltz, New York, just down the road,
9 Ulster County. I've lived here since I was seven,
10 and I have to say I'm seventy years old, that's a
11 long time. And -- but however long I've lived here
12 doesn't matter, what matters is what's been happening
13 to us in the county since this change occurred with
14 the voting system.

15 But first, I want to thank you for
16 having the forum here and having it around the
17 county. And I certainly want to con -- thank
18 Assembly member Sarahana Shrestha who made many of us
19 aware that this was going to happen here.

20 I want to thank Jen Metzger and our
21 Senator also for being here to support what we know
22 is really a -- a -- a call for money that is not
23 owed. First, let's see there. I, like many here,
24 have experienced anxiety, anger and really disbelief
25 that Central Hudson would have the audacity to ask

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2 for a substantial written increase when it is very
3 clear that they have not met their minimal
4 obligations as citizens.

5 They simply do not know how to bill
6 their customers. None of us here know why we get a
7 bill when we get it. We only know that there's some
8 number there that makes no sense. With me, I have
9 copies. There's no need for the copies.

10 I have copies of the bills that one
11 month is three times what the estimate was going to
12 be for the next -- for the next month. It's
13 impossible to understand the bill. The bills come at
14 a time when most of us are having trouble surviving.
15 May Central Hudson have trouble surviving.

16 You know, I really think I'm not -- I
17 don't subscribe very much or very often to conspiracy
18 theory, but I've come to the conclusion because my
19 bills, when the estimate comes in, is three to four
20 times what the actual reading is at the end of the --
21 the next bill.

22 So they're beginning -- they're
23 getting money up front, they're demanding money up
24 front, knowing that next month it's going to be less.
25 I don't know how many millions of dollars they can

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2 put in the bank for that.

3 But certainly the billing practice and
4 how often they bill much more when it's estimated
5 compared to when it's actual should be looked into.
6 I think it's fraudulent. I think they're billing --
7 there, you know, they have nothing to lose if they
8 ask for more money.

9 So it is impossible for any of us to
10 really figure out what's happening. It is up to you
11 to figure out what's happening. And I ask you to do
12 that. I know that you're trying to do it with due
13 diligence.

14 But I think what has to happen, no
15 matter what, they should not be a -- be granted money
16 for doing what they've done to all of this community
17 for the last two years. They should pay, we
18 shouldn't pay. Anyway, I, you know, I -- I said I've
19 come to realize that they have no idea what the usage
20 really is.

21 Yeah. They estimate it, and we have
22 to pay it. I've decided I'm only going to pay one
23 third of what they send me for the estimate. And
24 then, I'll make it up at the end. I'm afraid that
25 they're going to give me a charge, but let them try

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2 to charge me.

3 Let them try to charge you, don't pay
4 it. Pay something, because they will figure out that
5 eventually, they're going to have to come in line for
6 what is appropriate. And that really will only
7 happen if you do not grant them the rate increase. A
8 decrease is more likely and more preferred. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. WHITE: Thank you. Can you make
11 an announcement?

12 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Sure.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Just bear with us a
14 moment.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: We've been asked to
16 inform people that if they're taking the shuttle bus,
17 that the shuttle bus is leaving at this time. So you
18 have to make the bus. It's going. Okay. Mr.
19 Rowles?

20 MR. ROWLES: Yes. My name is Eric
21 Rowles, lifelong Kingstonian. Michelle Hinchey
22 convinced me to come up and speak. I moved in over
23 on Fair Street in 2005. Took over a management
24 position. My Central Hudson bills were every two
25 months. It started out around 375 bucks every two

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2 months. Confusing.

3 There was no reason for it. It's a
4 800 square foot apartment. I know everything is
5 energy efficient. So over the years it just kept
6 going up, and up, and up to a point to where during
7 the summertime my bills were between seven and nine
8 hundred dollars every two months. No reason.

9 Me and my wife worked about fifty to
10 sixty hours each. My daughter would stay with
11 family. No air conditioners. No electric being
12 used. That was till about 2010 when the other \$900
13 and thousand bills were coming up and we just kind of
14 had enough.

15 We called your office for about four
16 or five months, never got a response, sent emails.
17 We tried to deal with Central Hudson, but even, you
18 know, we paid it, you know, I could afford it at the
19 time, so we paid the bill.

20 They would tell us, just for a
21 complaint, it wasn't past due. We'd better pay it by
22 that day, because they'll shut me off the day after.
23 That's what we got told. I told them, try it. My --
24 my meters are in the cellar, you're not getting past
25 my dog.

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2 After that, we ended up noticing my
3 meter downstairs was buzzing because it was going so
4 fast around. So we called Central Hudson, they came
5 out. We shut everything off. We even unplugged the
6 refrigerator, the microwave, the stove and showed
7 them that the meter was still spinning.

8 Now, there's no electric in the
9 apartment at all. We took flashlights to go down to
10 the cellar. He immediately had somebody come over.
11 Changed the meter and told us, you know, after we
12 spoke to a lady on the phone, said, we're going to do
13 a, you know, six months.

14 Every two months, we're going to see
15 what your bill comes to. And then, what we'll do is
16 we'll do an adjustment. See what you've been, you
17 know, paying. My bill was max a \$148. During the
18 summertime, with air conditioning going, 160 bucks
19 every two months.

20 I got told at the six to eight month
21 area, we already destroyed that meter. Sorry,
22 nothing we can do for you. Okay. We spoke to a
23 lady, sorry, you can't talk to her. Don't know what
24 to tell you. That's all we got.

25 So then, you guys changed our -- not

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2 you guys, but Central Hudson changed over to monthly.
3 So it went from \$148 every two months to \$148 every
4 month. So now, I'm paying exactly what I did for two
5 months every month. Now, the past couple years, it's
6 gone right back up.

7 Right now, I'm in arrears. It's like
8 3,500 bucks that I owe them. It's running between 4-
9 to 700 bucks a month. It jumps around. It doesn't
10 have a, you know, you could see what it, you know, my
11 -- my. Company that I used to run, we used pie charts
12 every day, they don't understand how to use them.
13 They just build one, and then just slap things into
14 it.

15 So when it actually, if you actually
16 go in there and read it, you know, it shows you that
17 you use, let's just say, 75 percent was the electric
18 you used, is what they're saying that you used. And
19 then, they split up that 25 percent to your
20 miscellaneous, all those other fees and delivery
21 charges.

22 But when you look in there and it
23 shows you -- you used \$60 in electric and \$450 for a
24 delivery fee because that's what it actually says if
25 you actually read it. Why should I pay them \$450 to

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2 deliver electric?

3 I got a little frustrated and I asked
4 them, you know, I said, I've never seen one of your
5 trucks come in and pump an electric in my truck or in
6 my house for \$450. So that's, if you look at all my
7 bills, four zero five, you know, that \$900 one, I
8 don't have it anymore.

9 It's been so long. It was \$75 for
10 electric and \$800 and something for a delivery fee.
11 Why? I tried to convince people on Facebook. I
12 said, I'm looking for pizza companies that deliver
13 over there. I want you to bring their pizza to them
14 and tell them it's only, you know, that the bill's
15 only 30 bucks, but there's a \$1,200 delivery charge.

16 Let's see if they'll take it. Why
17 not? That's what they're doing to me and that's what
18 they're doing to everybody else. They won't put me
19 on a payment plan because I'm the manager of the
20 building, and the owner of the building doesn't have
21 a meter for himself. So they won't put me on.

22 But all my tenants, I have one tenant
23 who has his lights on all the time, TV, stereo,
24 everything else, he pays 90 bucks a month. My other
25 tenant pays 90 bucks, my mother, I rent her an

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2 apartment in the -- in the rear, her bill is like 40
3 bucks a month.

4 And my bill is still four to seven,
5 eight, nine hundred, whatever they decide to charge
6 me for the month. I'm clueless on what I'm supposed
7 to do because I'm not paying it. We pay a little bit
8 here and there.

9 I'm fighting for disability right now,
10 I don't work anymore, and I'm not really sure what
11 we're supposed to do. I'm not paying them 3,500
12 bucks. I shouldn't have even been paying 200, 300
13 bucks a month to try to catch up.

14 At this point, I haven't paid in two
15 months. If they want to shut me off, they can shut
16 me off because I'm not paying them anymore. I just
17 can't. So -- but I don't -- that's all I have to
18 say, yes.

19 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Did you have the --
20 a case with the Department of Public Service?

21 MR. ROWLES: No, you guys never called
22 me back.

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

24 MR. ROWLES: That's, I'm still waiting
25 for a call back. It's been 11 years. Still haven't

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2 gotten one back, so.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. The next
4 -- our next speaker is Sarahana Shrestha.

5 MS. SHRESTHA: Hello! I will be
6 making a longer testimony as far as the rate case in
7 November, but I did want to make a short comment.
8 The reason the delivery rates are so high, sometimes
9 even higher than your supply charges, is because
10 Central Hudson is a company that does not generate
11 electricity.

12 It makes its profit out of the
13 delivery service and that's very important to
14 understand. Delivery is their business. And they
15 are not, in fact, raising their delivery rates by 16
16 percent, they are actually raising it by 31 percent.
17 That's what they're asking for.

18 And today I just wanted to speak
19 quickly on behalf of hundreds of people who are not
20 here today that have talked to our office, that have
21 come to our town halls. And I can assure you that
22 the sense of helplessness and the desperation people
23 have is exactly as you've seen in this room today.

24 We see not only a lack of trust in
25 Central Hudson, unfortunately we also see a lack of

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2 trust on the regulatory system that regulates our
3 investor owned utilities. And I want to name, you
4 know, it has been brought up many times before, but
5 ultimately, people are really feeling, I think, more
6 explicitly, the tension between energy as a basic
7 necessity and it being subjected to a for-profit
8 motive.

9 We know that Central Hudson as a -- as
10 an investor owned utility must make profits every
11 quarter, but we also know that Central Hudson can
12 afford to operate with \$0 profit, which is why we are
13 asking for a rate decrease.

14 Not only because we have a lot of
15 seniors in this area who are on fixed income, not
16 only because people have not seen the wages go up
17 with the costs going everywhere else, but because
18 these costs are already too expensive to begin with,
19 and people are having to choose between utility bills
20 and rent.

21 And this is also causing in a very
22 volatile housing market for people to become quickly
23 homeless, having to choose between these different
24 types of bills. I represent the district in the
25 State Assembly that has 14 municipalities.

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2 And in every single municipality, the
3 average utility area has gone up by at least two fold
4 and as high as fivefold. And this is a very, so you
5 know, it's -- it's hitting even the more wealthier
6 parts of the district. It's hitting everyone.

7 And this is all people call our
8 office about this. But we are doing full time
9 customer service on behalf of Central Hudson. We
10 don't see a lot of callbacks from Central Hudson for
11 our constituents. We see a lot of helplessness, a
12 lot of frustration.

13 And I know that as a State legislator,
14 there's a lot of things we have to fix that are
15 broken at the -- at the State level, but I am asking
16 you today to use the existing system of a rate case
17 to do whatever is in your power, to deliver a rate
18 increase -- rate decrease for Central Hudson rate
19 payers. Thank you so much.

20 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Our next speaker is
21 Nancy Reye --

22 MS. REYE: Yes.

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: -- followed by Amy
24 Kletter.

25 MS. REYE: Good evening and thank you

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2 all again for being here. And everybody that's
3 trying to get to hear our voices, I'm sorry.
4 (unintelligible). I personally have had a lot of
5 issues with Central Hudson. In 2021, I received the
6 bill in March. I had not received another bill till
7 February 2022.

8 Now, when I called them about this
9 bill because it came in with \$3,500, they told me we
10 never generated a bill for you. So they couldn't
11 tell me. And then in June, they send me three bills
12 of 2022 stating that they calculated my year's bill
13 at a new rate.

14 I said, well, that's not fair because
15 in '21, the rate was lower. They said, well, that's
16 how we do it. I said, well, that's not how we do it.
17 I -- I have solar panels. I didn't use my solar
18 panels. My solar panels were generating energy for
19 two years.

20 I had that part of my home shut off
21 except for electric, so they can generate electric.
22 They told me, you only generated 1,100 kilowatts in
23 two years. My panels will not generate 1,100
24 kilowatts. That's -- I have the meter readings
25 downstairs.

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2 They tell me, well, you already used
3 up all your saved electricity through your solar
4 panels. I said, I just opened my house back up,
5 second floor, through May. This is only June, when I
6 called. They said, well, you already used your
7 allotted kilowatts. I said, how is that possible? I
8 have two years' worth of buildup. I never used it.

9 And she said, well, at the rate we're
10 going now, you used it all. I said, well, what did
11 you rate my solar usage at? She goes, well, like the
12 gentleman said earlier, you got to talk to the solar
13 people. I'm like, okay, so let me speak to them. No
14 one called me back.

15 They couldn't tell me what my solar
16 rate was, how much I generated or how much they were
17 giving me per kilowatt. I never got a cent back from
18 Central Hudson because I generated all this
19 electricity and didn't use it.

20 So I was like, okay, then now they
21 send me another bill this month or last month for
22 \$900 for heat, for gas. I cook with natural gas.
23 I'm telling you, I did not cook that much inside. It
24 was hot. I cooked out of my grill, which is not
25 connected to my natural gas.

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2 I'm like, how can you justify it?

3 They go, you used excess gas. Said that's
4 impossible. I'm not cooking inside. I'm not heating
5 my house. They said, well, that's what we rated at.
6 So I send you -- faithfully, I send a \$100.

7 And I did call the Public Service
8 people, and I do have a case number, and they said
9 someone from Central Hudson would call me. Someone
10 called me, and the woman said, well, we're only going
11 to take \$100 or \$200 off. And that's what we're
12 going to agree to, you agree or you don't.

13 So I said, well, I obviously do not
14 agree, because you're not going to make up a number
15 for a year's worth of electricity that I used or did
16 not use. And then, tell me this is how much I have
17 to pay (unintelligible) \$200. Plus, I make my own
18 electricity.

19 So I do have my -- my information and
20 I -- I really don't believe that they deserve a hike.
21 I mean, I've been working my whole life and I don't
22 get a raise every year unless minimum wage goes up,
23 that's the only time I get a raise. Of course, if
24 the cost of living go up, I don't get a raise.

25 People on social security are sure

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2 when the cost of living didn't go up for two years,
3 they didn't get an increase. We have a lot of
4 immigrants in this community and they don't know how
5 this works because electricity in other countries is
6 not a luxury, it's a right.

7 And we, as our country in America
8 here, we create electricity in other countries so
9 they can have electricity, and they don't make their
10 people pay for their electricity. In a third world
11 country, we help them get electricity, get water.
12 Here, we get electricity, you make us pay through
13 every orifice that we have.

14 So please, do your very best, and you
15 have -- Central Hudson, stop taking every cent from
16 us hard working people. And I am a senior. I might
17 not look it, but I really am. And I am on a fixed
18 income as well, that's why I have solar panels.

19 And my home, I don't rent it, I
20 actually paid out cash money to buy it. And Central
21 Hudson won't let me just generate my own electricity,
22 I have to feed my electricity back to Central Hudson.
23 And they're not paying me at the same rate they're
24 charging me for electricity.

25 Can you get that done, have them give

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2 me back my money as much as I'm paying them? If
3 you're going to take electricity from me, I should
4 get paid the same rate that you want to charge.
5 Thank you very much.

6 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Could you provide us
7 with the case number?

8 MS. REYE: Absolutely.

9 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Or you could just,
10 yeah. Our next speaker is Amy Kletter, followed by
11 Matt Kehoe.

12 All right. We'll go to Randolph
13 Horner.

14 MR. HORNER: Thank you very much,
15 Chair Christian, Commissioner Valesky, and I'm afraid
16 that I don't know the other two. I've noticed with
17 gratitude that there has not been a time clock that
18 shut people off in mid-sentence at a couple of
19 minutes.

20 I'm not going to take a half an hour,
21 but I've been involved with this category for a very,
22 very long time. And I've never seen anything
23 remotely like it in the entire United States of
24 America. Central Hudson synthesizes the bills.

25 They don't estimate the bills, they

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2 make it up with some kind of algorithms that they
3 can't even manage themselves. And besides the misery
4 that has been recounted to you, not just in this
5 hearing, but in numerous complaints.

6 What Central Hudson is doing on the
7 smallest, weakest, least capable electric utility --
8 investor owned electric utility in the State of New
9 York is a model for expropriation, for poor ... money
10 they're not entitled to, and we might as well come
11 right out and say that it is either an act of fraud
12 or an act of theft.

13 So I'd like to propose a solution,
14 you're very excellent investigators. When this
15 changed from agony to outrage, performed a thorough
16 investigation, and there was a scathing report.

17 So I want to say it's actually not
18 proper to conflate the combined thefts, which may
19 amount to a 100 million dollars, they may amount to a
20 150 million dollars, they may amount to 200 million
21 dollars because the patient is bleeding out and
22 nothing has changed.

23 So let me be a witness, poor old
24 Charlie Franey got the axe, Charlie didn't cook this
25 up, I got to see a lot of Charlie, a lot of Central

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2 Hudson people after Chair Zibelman came up from
3 Philadelphia and with the encouragement of our former
4 Governor Cuomo and the Public Service Commission, and
5 the Department of Public Service, instituted the
6 reforming the Energy Vision initiative.

7 A lot of those proceedings are not
8 more abundant, I don't know what they're doing now,
9 I've been a party, not just an onlooker to numerous
10 proceedings following on to the 14-101 or whatever it
11 was so long ago, Chair -- Chair Christian is familiar
12 with that trajectory.

13 I scarcely even bother to look at the
14 matter master anymore. Because something very, very
15 wrong has happened and I have a ready solution that
16 is within your purview, suspend this improper rate
17 case now, place it in abeyance until a thorough
18 forensic investigation does a missing money study.

19 It's not at all difficult to find out
20 how much electricity, and you could say gas too, I
21 didn't even think about it, because we should be
22 obsoleting gas and putting Central Hudson out of the
23 gas business. But let's focus on the case at hand,
24 where's the missing money study?

25 It's very easy to find out how much

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2 electricity was obtained from the wholesale market.
3 And how much electricity, therefore, was delivered
4 across the board.

5 If you have to synthesize anything at
6 all, it's not to allow Central Hudson to consider --
7 to continue synthesizing these fraudulent bills as
8 implements of theft. Simply synthesize according to
9 the usage of electricity when we had meters and we
10 read the meters.

11 And from that forensic accounting
12 could synthesize how to apportion the actual
13 electricity that was bought in the wholesale market
14 and delivered across Central Hudson's system to this
15 universe of customers.

16 And I say this, this is not a fantasy,
17 this is a way of bringing equity as regulated. We're
18 entitled to safe and reasonable service, this -- I'm
19 sorry, to safe and reliable service at just and
20 reasonable rates.

21 Mr. Valesky is nodding his head, that
22 is -- that is the rubric, that is the dictum.

23 COMMISSIONER VALESKY: Yes, it is.

24 MR. HORNER: I will not say that
25 Central Hudson service has not been safe, we haven't

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2 electrocuted many people. It hasn't been
3 particularly reliable, but I'm trying to cut to the
4 chase. These are not just and reasonable rates that
5 have been reflected in these bills that have caused
6 agony to hundreds of thousands of people.

7 And there is a regulatory result, if
8 ESCO's -- we're always trying to police the ESCO's,
9 if ESCO's had failed good business practices for a
10 month or two or three, in the same -- to the same
11 extent that Central Hudson has done in executing
12 these implements of theft, then you would have
13 immediately suspended them.

14 Now and then, when there's a radical
15 emergency, and because of a weather event, there are
16 complaints about the utility. One governor or
17 another in different states that I've known over a
18 long period of time will say, we're going to review
19 their license.

20 Well, Central Hudson has manifestly
21 made itself subject to the most punitive review and
22 recovering of the rate payer's money immediate
23 cessation of these horrific practices. I'll name
24 two, right now they're sending out waves of demand
25 letters meant to frighten not just old people, people

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2 of every age and every station in life.

3 The demand letters state this
4 arrearage that is built up over these fraudulent
5 synthetic practices and they're just saying, you must
6 pay immediately or you'll be turned off. It doesn't
7 say, we've determined that we'll review your case.

8 And we want to put you on notice that
9 you will be subject to termination, but we're
10 determined to get to the bottom of how your arrearage
11 built up. No, nothing like that, okay?

12 Another particularly scandalous
13 practice, our assemblywoman has given help and
14 service by holding her own town board meetings to
15 help educate people so they can come in and complain,
16 they haven't overwhelmed this hearing.

17 But nevertheless, there's a great deal
18 of awareness, there has not been a diligent pursuit
19 of the scandalous practices that were identified, was
20 it 13 months ago, I've -- I've been busy actually
21 scaling up radically larger investment in clean
22 energy so our State will stop being a laughing stock.

23 Just review Comptroller DiNapoli's
24 report on the fact that we have a fair -- even a
25 fraction of the C.L.C.P.A. commitment that we've

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2 made, so I -- I don't need to prosecute my own
3 efforts in that direction.

4 What I'm trying to bring before this
5 regulatory body with the Chair actually here with us
6 in Kingston is there is a ready solution. Everything
7 in abeyance. Stopped the onerous and threatening
8 collection practices.

9 And the most scandalous of those
10 happens over in -- happened to senior citizens, I am
11 told by the staff of our assembly person. For a
12 while there was a suspension of collections and some
13 senior citizens built up an arrearage that they
14 didn't even know existed.

15 But suddenly and arbitrarily, Central
16 Hudson dropped the hammer, and because they were on
17 auto pay, they didn't go and get a month or two or
18 whatnot, they went in and cleaned out these senior
19 citizens bank accounts, period.

20 They just -- they just used their auto
21 pay facility to drain the account because they had
22 built up these arguably fraudulent arrearages.
23 There's something else being hurt very, very badly,
24 community distributed generation depends upon
25 accurate, fair billing.

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2 You have two parties, you have Central
3 Hudson buying electricity from the wholesale markets,
4 but you have Central Hudson buying electricity
5 generated by the C.D.G. providers and put into
6 distribution, and then the bills now are a combined
7 bill, which is even worse than before.

8 When you paid the C.D.G. provider, and
9 then if you had an argument with Central Hudson
10 because they've gotten it badly wrong, then it could
11 be worked out. Because Central Hudson -- I want to
12 say one more thing, I'm trying to keep the thread,
13 but there is no excuse for Central Hudson, who said
14 they spent 90 million dollars on this billing system,
15 I saw it in print, it's not gossip.

16 It's scandalous, the old billing
17 system they had relied upon reading the meter. And I
18 don't know how much of this synthetic billing
19 happened after they frankly just quit reading meters.

20 I know that trucks used to go around
21 and they -- they read the meter via radio frequency
22 sensors, and they delivered the data back to Central
23 Hudson, and they -- in my experience over the last 20
24 years, they managed somehow to have a fairly
25 consistent billing practice.

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2 So this thing is run completely out of
3 control, I offer a solution, which is let's stop
4 conflating this monumental, missing money question
5 with the fact that they put in for a rate increase.
6 Now, the last scandal I mentioned before, it wasn't
7 Charlie Franey's fault.

8 Charlie Franey had nothing to do with
9 creating this, but he was a sacrificial lamb. The
10 new CEO is now the star of a series of television ads
11 where outright misinformation, disinformation,
12 deceptive statements, and outright falsehoods are
13 uttered.

14 The outright falsehood is he stands
15 there just like -- like your -- your nephew, I say as
16 a person of a certain age, and he says, all the
17 people who overpaid have been paid back, or words to
18 that effect, have been compensated, returned, blah,
19 blah, blah, utter falsehood.

20 Just in the -- this hearing tonight,
21 you've had ample evidence along with the
22 investigators' report that they're -- they're trying
23 a disinformation campaign to try to soften things up
24 for the rate case. It's not about the rate case, the
25 rate case is an absurdity.

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2 I've -- I've -- I've lived through --
3 I don't know how many hundreds of rate cases similar
4 Public Utility Commission actions across the country,
5 and this is the most outrageous thing I've ever found
6 or seen.

7 So if you place this rate case in
8 abeyance, that's the shot across the bow, it's not
9 the solution. But -- I'm going to say a couple more
10 things that don't pertain to the rate case except for
11 the fact that Central Hudson says their rate
12 increases have to do with the fact that they're
13 helping prepare New York to move forward in the
14 energy transition to renewable energy, blah, blah,
15 blah.

16 So I'm going to say something that's
17 going to curl the hair of everybody in this room. We
18 just had a wise action of this Commission to refuse
19 to burden the ratepayer with mistakes that are made
20 with offshore wind and the New York Bight.

21 I am a renewable energy practitioner,
22 financier, and fanatic advocate, but everything about
23 the way we've planned for the energy transition has
24 made New York State a laughingstock with a 30
25 gigawatt installed load.

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2 We know that we have in the energy
3 transition to create possibly four, five, six times
4 the generation of dispatchable power to meet the
5 gigantic loads inherent in decarbonizing New York.

6 I'm going to tell you what it's going
7 to cost, and a lot of people agree with me, forget
8 about the 900 million that this Commission allocates
9 to NYSERDA for various programs derived mostly from
10 what, a value added tax on electricity sales.

11 It's already the ratepayer's money in
12 play, forget about that amount of money it's going to
13 cost 50 million -- excuse me, I misspoke already.
14 It's going to cost 50 billion a year for a decade,
15 it's going to cost half a trillion dollars for New
16 York State alone, forget about our most -- about the
17 Inflation Reduction Act, which I'm proud of.

18 But the Inflation Reduction Act, if we
19 directed all of the intentions of the Inflation
20 Reduction Act, it would be insufficient for New York
21 State alone.

22 So that's why circling back --
23 circling back, the monstrous offense of Central
24 Hudson has undermined one of the key tools that is
25 naively expected to be the source of this build out

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2 of renewable energy, that is to say small, grid-
3 connected C.D.G., mostly solar which we can never
4 possibly site to the extent that's needed.

5 But we're even allowing fraudulent
6 billing practices to undermine the C.D.G. that we
7 have now. So it doesn't model a future in that
8 respect. So I'll wrap up by saying it is within your
9 power, it's within your purview, it's within your --
10 dare I say, responsibility to fire the first shot
11 across the bow of Central Hudson saying the rate case
12 is hereby held in abeyance.

13 We're not going to spend any of our
14 time at the Department of Public Service playing the
15 old game of you say you deserve this much and we say
16 you deserve that much less, and we go back and forth
17 -- back and forth, and we'll come up somewhere in the
18 middle.

19 That's been going on in the P.U.C., in
20 the Public Utility Commission arena forever, okay.
21 So abate this rate case, and then declare that you're
22 going to take the investigative resources that you
23 already have and that you're going to come up with a
24 missing money study and find a way to cause Central
25 Hudson to reimburse the customers for what has

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2 already been squeezed out of them and forgive them
3 for the appropriate portion of what they've
4 fraudulently been billed and are now threatened with
5 these cancellations, these terminations, these
6 arrearages that are making people lose their minds,
7 okay? Thank you for your patience in listening to
8 this overview.

9 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Phoebe
10 Gittleson?

11 MR. KEHOE: Matt Kehoe from the last.

12 A.L.J. COSTELLO: You're -- okay.

13 MR. KEHOE: I was waiting for the lady
14 before me.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay. Go ahead.

16 MR. KEHOE: So I think it's refreshing
17 to find out about PULP, to see Michelle Hinchey and
18 the rest of the public servants who came out today.
19 Laura Nordstrom, who is apparently talking people
20 down from ledges, left and right.

21 I don't want to go too into specifics,
22 I think we've heard enough specific things about
23 specific people, but to rather to -- to look at
24 things more aggregately and to follow up some of the
25 people who preceded me who I wish were still here to

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2 hear what I have to say about what they had to say.

3 There was a lady who said that for
4 every person here, there's somebody else. I think
5 for every person who was here, there's at least 100
6 other people who've had issues, if not a 1000, I
7 apologize. I didn't even know I was going to be here
8 today, so.

9 Bills before 2019, before September of
10 2019 compared to bills today, I think it would be
11 conservative to say that people's rates are somewhere
12 in the vicinity of 30 to 50 percent higher than they
13 were. I think a lot of people who are here will tell
14 you it's much higher than that.

15 And now Central Hudson wants to
16 increase their bill by another 16 percent. I think
17 an important question that no one is asking is have
18 the linemen seen an increase in their pay of 30
19 percent over the last 2 years, and will they see
20 another 16 increase -- 16 percent increase in their
21 pay if we start paying that much more.

22 Where's the money really going?
23 Electricity is a public utility, it's -- it's
24 delivered, that's their -- their shtick, is they're
25 delivering the electricity. They're delivering it

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2 through telephone poles and -- and wires that
3 taxpayers essentially have paid for, they didn't pay
4 for it.

5 Central Hudson didn't invest the money
6 to put up the whole infrastructure that exists. In
7 the past I've had issues with other utilities, I had
8 an oil and propane company that I had some major
9 issues with.

10 So I fired them and I found someone
11 else to do business with, we don't have that recourse
12 with Central Hudson and that's a huge problem. It
13 gives them license to be as inept, I think is a good
14 term for it, as they feel like being.

15 As far as the meter reading issues, I
16 think that Central Hudson -- Central Hudson is
17 clearly following a script when they talk to people
18 on the phone to avoid accountability, they'll put
19 somebody on hold. I think the rule of thumb is two
20 hours.

21 And after two hours they just released
22 the call, and that's that, and they figure you're not
23 going to waste your time calling them again to sit on
24 hold for two more hours. They're lying about being
25 able to read the meters, or to find the meter, or

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2 that the meter is faulty.

3 We've heard -- I think, four different
4 stories about a meter that's spinning with nothing
5 turned on. We've heard about they couldn't -- they
6 couldn't access the meter where they didn't know
7 where the meter was, was the reality of it.

8 We've heard about the delivery fees
9 outweighing the actual usage fee where someone's
10 using 60 dollars' worth of electricity and the
11 delivery fee is 400 dollars, which I personally find
12 completely unacceptable.

13 As somebody else said, there's no
14 truck driving up to deliver the electricity, the
15 infrastructure is there and it just arrives, it's the
16 grid, it's here. They've had record profits, jobs
17 listed on Central Hudson, which I checked recently,
18 they don't show their wages, they say competitive
19 wages on most of them.

20 And more than half the jobs that are
21 listed are internships, so they're certainly not job
22 creators. It seems that their record profits are
23 most likely going to pay for vacations, second homes,
24 maybe yachts. If we were to open up our own meters
25 and roll them back, or tamper with them to make it

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2 look like we weren't using the amount of electricity
3 that we're using, would that be illegal, would that
4 be something that would be looked down upon?

5 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: If you don't mind,
6 I'm going to take a moment and say that's incredibly
7 dangerous and no one should be tampering with their
8 meters.

9 MR. KEHOE: But let's say I have the
10 know-how and the capabilities, would that be an
11 acceptable thing to do? So then if the company who
12 we pay is doing the same thing, is fraud, fraud? I
13 mean to me that's -- that's a big thing.

14 Is -- if I do something I can go to
15 jail for as fraud, if a corporation does the same
16 thing to, let's say thousands or tens of thousands of
17 people there's no consequences. And just for
18 perspective, if we just -- if everybody just thinks
19 about \$2,403.85, just for a minute, what it means to
20 you, how much -- what do you buy with it, how much
21 work do you have to do to earn it?

22 It's probably in the days or weeks for
23 most of us, for how long it takes to earn that money.
24 It could be half -- half of a -- half of a rent
25 payment, it could be a full rent payment, it could be

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2 two rent payments.

3 Just for perspective, that's the
4 amount of money earned in an hour if somebody makes 5
5 million dollars a year and they work every week for
6 forty hours, \$2,403.85.

7 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

8 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Phoebe
9 Gittleson?

10 MS. GITTLESON: Hi, my name is Phoebe
11 Gittleson, I moved -- I moved to Saugerties last
12 year. Every single bill I've received since this
13 year of living in Saugerties has been fraudulent. I
14 believe Central Hudson's operations violate our New
15 York consumer protection laws and therefore should
16 not be rewarded with a rate increase.

17 Please listen to the people you were
18 supposed to serve and say no to Central Hudson.
19 Thank you.

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

21 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. That's
22 the last -- we've come to the last of our speakers
23 that have registered to speak, we'd like to thank
24 everybody for attending. Thank everybody that made
25 comments here this evening.

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2 We'd also like to thank the
3 Chairperson and Commissioner Valesky for -- for
4 attending here. If you still want to make comments,
5 there are different ways that you can still do that.
6 You can submit them by mail to the Department of
7 Public Service, you can submit them by email --

8 A.L.J. MORENO: Speak closer to the
9 mic.

10 A.L.J. COSTELLO: You can submit them
11 by email, and you can also call the 1-800 number, all
12 of these are listed in the notice of tonight's event.
13 All of those ways to do that and comments are
14 accepted until the case is actually decided.

15 Again, thank you, we're going to go
16 off the record.

17 (The hearing concluded at 9:27 p.m.)
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2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 I, MONIQUE HINES, do hereby certify that the foregoing was
4 reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place, as
5 stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that the
6 foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of pages 1
7 through 152, is a true record of all proceedings had at
8 the hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 26th day of October, 2023.

11

12 MONIQUE HINES, Reporter

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