

1 9/20/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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 & 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 & Electric
12 Corporation for Gas Service.

13
14 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

15 DATE: September 20, 2023 at 1:03 p.m.

16 VENUE: WebEx

17 BEFORE: ALJ ASHLEY MORENO

18 ALJ JAMES COSTELLO

19 ALSO PRESENT:

20 JOHN MAGGIORE, Commissioner

21

22

23 Reported by Anthony McClain

24

25

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2 (The hearing commenced at 1:03 p.m.)

3 THE REPORTER: Your Honor, we are on
4 the record.

5 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. I call the
6 cases 23-E-0418 and 23-G-0419, proceedings on motions
7 of the Commission as to the rates, charges, rules,
8 and regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
9 Corporation for electric and gas service.

10 Good afternoon everyone and welcome.
11 We are here today for a public statement hearing that
12 was noticed on August 18 of 2023. On July 31st,
13 2023, Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation,
14 who I will refer to as Central Hudson, filed
15 amendments to its electric and gas tariff schedule
16 proposing to increasing its annual electric and gas
17 delivery revenues effective July 1st, 2024.

18 Central Hudson proposes to increase
19 its electric delivery revenue by approximately \$139.5
20 million, which is a 31.9 percent increase in base
21 delivery revenue or a 16.4 percent increase in total
22 revenue. And it also proposes to increase its
23 natural gas delivery revenues by approximately \$41.5
24 million which is a 29.2 percent increase in base
25 delivery revenue or a 19 percent in total revenue.

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2 The actual bill impact of these proposed changes on
3 any particular customer class will vary based upon
4 revenue allocation and rate design.

5 Under New York State Law, the Public
6 Service Commission must consider a utility's proposal
7 and may adopt it, or reject in whole or in part, or
8 modify it. We are holding this hearing so that you
9 can provide your comments on these proposals for the
10 Commission's consideration.

11 My name is Ashley Moreno and I am an
12 Administrative Law Judge for the Department of Public
13 Service. With me today is Administrative Law Judge
14 James Costello, also from the Department. And
15 together, we are responsible for presiding over the
16 hearings in these cases and the development of a
17 complete record in these proceedings. The Public
18 Service Commission will decide what Central Hudson's
19 terms and conditions of service will be. The Public
20 Service Commission has seven members. The
21 Chairperson, Rory Christian and six Commissioners,
22 Diane Berman, James Alesi, Tracey Edwards, John
23 Howard, David Valesky, and John Maggiore. And I see
24 that we have Commissioner Maggiore is here with us
25 today. Commissioner, would you like to make any

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2 statement?

3 COMMISSIONER MAGGIORE: Thank you very
4 much. I -- I just wanted to thank everybody who
5 turned out to participate in this process. It is a,
6 you know, participatory process. And I -- I try to
7 sit in on as many public statement hearings as I can
8 because what -- what folks say is -- is often very
9 important as we consider items that come before the
10 Public Service Commission. And I'd also highlight
11 that it's especially useful when members of the
12 public have data or factual information that's not
13 already part of the record. And so -- so that I and
14 my fellow Commissioners better understand how items
15 affect people in real life. I -- I am also very
16 interested in hearing people's personal stories so I
17 want -- again, I want to thank everybody for turning
18 out.

19 I am here to listen so you're not
20 going to hear from me again. But I very much look
21 forward to hearing what you have to say. Thank you
22 very much, Judge.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. So as I've
24 stated, the purpose of our hearing today is to
25 provide you with an opportunity to tell the

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2 Commission your thoughts on Central Hudson's rate
3 proposal. The statements that you make today will
4 become part of the case record. We have a court
5 reporter joining us who will prepare a transcript of
6 the hearing which will be included in the official
7 record for this proceeding so that your comments can
8 be considered by all of the members of the
9 Commission.

10 When it is ready, the transcript will
11 be available for view on the Department of Public
12 Service website. This hearing is not an evidentiary
13 hearing or a question and answer session, but really
14 a forum to hear from you and hear your comments. And
15 also, I would like to highlight that this is not the
16 only opportunity for comment. If I could ask for the
17 next slide to be advanced, please. If you did not
18 register to speak at today's hearing but you would
19 like your views included in the record, there are a
20 variety of other ways to comment that were listed in
21 the public notice for today's event. For those of
22 you who are participating electronically, those other
23 ways to comment are also on your screen in both
24 English and Spanish. You can do both by submitting
25 comments on the Department's website, by email,

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2 regular mail, or by phone. And regardless of how the
3 comments are submitted, they will be given equal
4 consideration. Comments may be submitted and will be
5 considered throughout the case.

6 If you have registered to make a
7 statement, we ask that you please summarize any
8 lengthy written statements orally. And then submit
9 the full written statement by email or mail. We do
10 have a number of people registered to speak today.
11 So we will ask that you try to stay within around
12 three minutes to make your statement. So we do have
13 people registered who are participating
14 electronically. And we may also have participants by
15 phone as well.

16 In either case, make sure that you
17 only have one audio input from one device.
18 Otherwise, we may experience problems with feedback.
19 I will call the persons that have registered one by
20 one to speak. If someone is not available when I
21 call them, I will continue with the next person. And
22 we'll come back to those people who are not available
23 at the end. And for telephone participants who are
24 speaking in English today, when I call out your name,
25 I will ask that you press star three on your phone so

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2 that we can recognize you and unmute your line. It
3 might just take us a little while to locate you and
4 unmute your lines so please be patient. And do not
5 start speaking until you hear a beep or are notified
6 that your line has been unmuted. And for those
7 registered electronically, after I call your name, we
8 will unmute your line. Again, please be patient with
9 us, it might just take us a moment. You should hear
10 a tone and see that the microphone icon is no longer
11 red. And again, if you've joined us electronically
12 and you are using your phone line, you will be
13 reminded to unmute that as well.

14 So we will begin by calling members of
15 the public who have registered to speak. And then we
16 will move on to any individual who is registered to
17 speak that is also a party to the proceeding. As
18 parties, you have greater privileges and
19 opportunities to build the record in this proceeding.
20 And so consequently, we'll ask that you summarize any
21 lengthy comments and submit them in writing. Please
22 speak slowly and clearly so that the court reporter
23 can accurately capture your statement for the record.
24 When your line is unmuted, please state your name.
25 And if you are speaking on behalf of an organization,

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2 please state the name of that organization. Once we
3 can confirm that we can hear you, you can proceed and
4 make your comment.

5 And I'll just ask our interpreter to
6 repeat on the WebEx line the next statement, please.
7 For people who will be listening to or providing
8 comments in Spanish, we have a separate number set up
9 for that purpose. We would ask that you mute your
10 phone when you enter the meeting. When we call out
11 your name, you would unmute your line and let the
12 interpreter know that you were there and provide your
13 statement. The interpreter will interpret your
14 statement into English in this WebEx so that the
15 court reporter can include it in the record for
16 consideration by the Commission.

17 (Mr. Isaias made a statement in
18 Spanish)

19 MR. ISAIAS: Thank you.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. So with
21 that, we will -- I will call our first speaker who is
22 Jonathan Jacobson. And if you have joined us by
23 phone, if you could press star three. Jonathan
24 Jacobson. Okay. I do see a raised hand. Perhaps
25 Mr. Jacobson is with Mr. Eckley.

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2 MR. ECKLEY: This is Eric. No, John
3 Jacobson is not with me.

4 A.L.J. MORENO: Oh, okay.

5 MR. ECKLEY: But I am here.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Well, sir, we have a
7 list of folks who have registered to speak and
8 thereafter, we'll open it up. So -- so we will open
9 it up later if you would like to make a comment.

10 MR. ECKLEY: Thank you. But I hope
11 I'm able to stay long enough. Thank you.

12 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay. Thank you.
13 Okay, our next speaker is Edmond Robert. Okay. I'm
14 not seeing Mr. Roberts. Again, if you could press
15 star three on your phone. Okay. Elsie Butterworth.
16 And again, if you've called in, if you could press
17 star three? Eric Wood and your line has been
18 unmuted, Mr. Wood.

19 MR. WOOD: Can you hear me, Your
20 Honor?

21 A.L.J. MORENO: Now we can. Thank
22 you.

23 MR. WOOD: Great. Good afternoon. My
24 name is Eric Wood. And I'm the Hudson Valley
25 Regional Coordinator for the New York Public Interest

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2 Research Group, NYPIRG. NYPIRG is a New York based
3 non-partisan, not-for-profit research advocacy
4 organization. And we appreciate the opportunity to
5 comment on the Central Hudson's significant proposed
6 rate hikes.

7 Central Hudson wants to raise rates
8 for electricity customers by 139.5 million and by
9 41.5 million for the July 1st, 2023 to June 30 of
10 2025 rate year. They project the typical customer
11 with gas and electric service will pay around \$60
12 more per month, about -- evenly split between
13 electric and gas bill increases. That's an enormous
14 amount of money for Hudson Valley residents
15 especially those on a fixed income, who are wage
16 earners, who have families, in an area where the cost
17 of living is already high. The impacts on low-income
18 residents and the members of disadvantaged
19 communities are of particular concern. While Central
20 Hudson claims the needs to raise rates to comply with
21 the C.L.C.P.A., their track record does nothing to
22 prove that they want to comply with the State's clean
23 energy laws.

24 First, for one example, Central Hudson
25 has not publicly reported their progress. They have

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2 not made a strong enough effort to mitigate the
3 effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas
4 emissions, to promote efficiency and conservation
5 methods, sustainability boost, and the use of
6 renewable energy, nor to keep the cost of energy
7 affordable for consumers that they had proposed in
8 recent years.

9 The latest rate filing does not
10 inspire confidence that Central Hudson will do enough
11 to comply with the State climate policies or provide
12 affordable electric and gas services. It's worth
13 noting that New York's climate policies will drive
14 more customers to invest in their own utility like
15 Central Hudson. Yet, at every turn, Central Hudson
16 looks to ratepayers to foot the bills to the
17 infrastructure. And they'll make it much more
18 profitable in our increasing electrified world. The
19 Public Service Commission must scrutinize the rigged
20 request and make sure that Central Hudson is not
21 asking ratepayers to foot the bill for spikes and
22 cost and for ignoring -- or delayed maintenance or
23 infrastructure that is primarily to benefit
24 shareholders, not ratepayers or public policies.

25 Central Hudson needs to be held

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2 accountable to ratepayers and overseen by a robust
3 regulatory structure to enforce standards and protect
4 consumers. The P.S.C. needs to establish measurable
5 benchmarks, and incentives, and penalties being met
6 by Central Hudson. The public can't rely on the
7 invisible hand of the market. Central Hudson should
8 release an annual public report card on how they are
9 making progress in greenhouse gas reduction goals
10 towards the energy efficiency. People are struggling
11 to make ends meet from the lingering economic impacts
12 of the pandemic to in -- the increasing cost of
13 living. So when utility bills are a big part of that
14 already, New York should be reducing these charges as
15 many states already are. On top of the global
16 pandemic, we are currently facing a climate crisis.
17 And Central Hudson needs to make larger leaps to
18 invest in our energy system needs like renewable
19 heat, wind, and solar, and battery storage instead of
20 continuing to raise our rates. Fortis, Central
21 Hudson's parent company reported over 1.3 billion in
22 profits in 2022. Including reporting of global news
23 wire, and Central Hudson's website report, they spent
24 1.8 million on environmental compliance expenditures.
25 We ask that the set -- we ask that the Public Service

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2 Commission to take these notes into consideration and
3 make every effort to work with Central Hudson to
4 lower New York's utilities bills, not increase them.
5 Unless climate progress is affordable, we won't be
6 able to meet our goals. The utilities stand to
7 greatly profit from decarbonization and
8 electrification. And it's in the utility's best
9 interest to keep rates affordable and at the same
10 time, they work to transition to fully electric
11 economy.

12 MS. LUCY: Excuse me, interpreter, I
13 need you --

14 MR. WOOD: I've heard and thank the
15 Public Service Commission -- yes?

16 MS. LUCY: In the future, I need you -
17 -

18 MR. WOOD: Yup, you're all good.
19 Thank you.

20 MS LUCY: I need you to slow down the
21 speed of the speech because he's unable to catch up
22 with the interpretation. Thank you.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. I believe
24 Mr. Wood --

25 MR. WOOD: Okay.

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2 A.L.J. MORENO: -- had -- had finished
3 his statement.

4 MR. WOOD: Yes. And I want to thank
5 you, the Public Service Commission, for the
6 opportunity to share our preliminary thoughts on the
7 proposed rate increases.

8 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
9 And if we could, just as a reminder as our
10 interpreter stated, if -- if you are making a
11 statement today, if you could be mindful that we are
12 -- we do have interpreters who are interpreting your
13 statements for those that might be interested in
14 hearing them in Spanish. So if I could ask that you
15 try to -- to keep a slower pace with your speech,
16 that would be very appreciated. Our next speaker is
17 Laura Yusupovo and your mic has been unmuted.

18 MS. YUSUPOVO: Every -- do you hear
19 me?

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Now we do. Thank you.

21 MS. YUSUPOVO: Okay. So hello, my
22 name is Laura Yusopovo. I am at -- I'm from New
23 Paltz and the Central Hudson proposed hike plan
24 states an individual's accessibility to resources
25 that'll be eliminated with the passing of this bill.

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2 This bill increases 60 percent of electric bills and
3 19 percent of gas bills. Although to some, it may
4 not seem a lot. These rates will continue to
5 increase here on out. For many of us, an increase in
6 price is a loss of food on the table, clothing for
7 their child, or necessary school supplies. For
8 people like me --

9 A.L.J. MORENO: I apologize very much
10 for interrupting. Could I ask you just to go a
11 little bit slower?

12 MS. YUSUPOVO: Yes. I could do that
13 for you.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.

15 MS. YUSUPOVO: So the bill increase is
16 16 percent of electric bills and 19 percent of gas
17 bills. And although to some, it may not seem a lot,
18 these rates will continue to increase here on out.
19 For many, those increase in prices, is a loss of food
20 on the table, clothing on their child, and necessary
21 school supplies. For an individual like me who work
22 on the lower class with a single mother working from
23 paycheck to paycheck, this isn't just a simple
24 increase in the utilities bill. A more sustainable
25 alter -- alternative is using solar energy. This

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2 will give the residents a guarantee that there would
3 be no hike in their bills, and as a health -- and as
4 a healthier alternative to all involved. As there
5 should be monthly payments towards this purchase of
6 the solar panels until ownership for a long-term
7 benefits. On the contrary, with utility power, there
8 is a binding agent where the price could always
9 change. There's little to no control when in use of
10 utility power because as long as there's a dependency
11 on the public to use power, the company will
12 continuously charge at increasing rates. In summary,
13 Central Hudson should not increase or receive a rate
14 increase, not only because there are more reasonable
15 and sustainable measures, but because for many, it
16 would not be affordable. This increase serves no
17 justice to the public, nor the environment.
18 Therefore, vote against the Central Hudson rate
19 increase for more acceptable and overall greener
20 lifestyle. Thank you.

21 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
22 Our next speaker will be Shay Kessler and your line
23 has been unmuted.

24 MS. KESSLER: Can you hear me okay?

25 A.L.J. MORENO: Now we can. Thank

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2 you.

3 MS. KESSLER: Okay. Thank you for
4 providing the opportunity for me to speak today. My
5 name is Shay Kessler. I live in Kingston and I
6 attend graduate school while I work two jobs. So the
7 hike in the fixed rate would make it absolutely
8 unnecessarily difficult for people like myself to pay
9 their bills. In between work and school, I work 50
10 hours a week. And between both the jobs, I make only
11 about \$2,000 a month and my rent is 1,200 leaving me
12 with only \$200 a week. My monthly expenses include
13 my phone bill at \$70, my car insurance \$140, and my
14 internet, \$55, and I hadn't even included my student
15 loans. This barely leaves me with money for food.
16 So I can't afford a \$60 hike and neither can many
17 other citizens. Studies have shown that big
18 companies make up about 70 percent of gas emissions
19 and carbon emissions. So companies like Central
20 Hudson have an obligation to relinquish some of their
21 profits instead of asking everyday citizens who work
22 paycheck to paycheck to give what little we have.
23 We're already doing what's in our power to reduce our
24 carbon footprint such as recycling our bottles and
25 all of our recyclable materials, and cutting cost on,

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2 you know, driving, and -- and carpooling. But now,
3 it's Central Hudson's turn. If climate change
4 continues to accelerate at this alarming rate,
5 utility bills will no longer matter. And the least
6 of our concerns will be how much our utility bill is.
7 But whether we can even survive on this planet. The
8 time is now for some serious action and for Central
9 Hudson to pay a significant role in the outcome of
10 our global climate.

11 Last Sunday at our End Fossil Fuels
12 March, there were about 80,000 people marching to end
13 fossil fuels and protect our climate. And I hope
14 that you can consider the number of young people and
15 the number of people who do care so much about doing
16 what's right, but do not have the same kind of pull
17 and power like Central Hudson does. And their track
18 record is not entirely clean. So I would encourage
19 them to use what profits they have to do what is
20 within their power to make a difference that can
21 prevent catastrophic events of -- of our climate.
22 Thank you very much.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
24 Our next speaker is Rosemarie Da Cruz and I believe
25 your line is now unmuted and if you are speaking, we

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2 can't hear you yet.

3 MS. DA CRUZ: Okay now?

4 A.L.J. MORENO: Uh, yes, there you go.

5 MS. DA CRUZ: Okay. Great. Good
6 afternoon, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity
7 to speak today. My name is Rosemarie Da Cruz. And I
8 want to clarify that I am speaking today as a
9 resident of Poughkeepsie and Central Hudson customer,
10 not in my capacity as party. I first want to thank
11 the Public Service Commission for providing Spanish
12 language access in this meeting even if there aren't
13 Spanish speakers here today. The fact that you are
14 making things accessible for this vital part of our
15 community shows your commitment to public service. I
16 am here at this hearing to strongly urge the Public
17 Service Commission to deny Central Hudson's rate
18 increase. We should not be perpetuating fossil fuel
19 infrastructure in the midst of our life threatening
20 climate crisis. And this cannot be said enough about
21 Central Hudson in particular, a company that has been
22 riddled with issues and controversies for years.
23 Central Hudson is not deserving of any rate increase
24 whatsoever because they are exceptionally negligent
25 and incompetent. An investigation by this Public

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2 Service Commission found that due to Central Hudson's
3 own negligence, the broken billing system they've
4 rolled out resulted in over 8,000 customers being
5 over billed and thousands who are -- who had months
6 of payments drawn from their account without their
7 consent. Though Central Hudson claims that they have
8 remedied these issues, my conversations and my
9 experiences as a community advocate tell me
10 differently. I have had dozens and dozens of
11 conversations with neighbors who haven't had their
12 billing issues resolved, can't afford to pay their
13 bills, or literally can't even get Central Hudson on
14 the phone to resolve the issue. I myself have even
15 gotten excessive bills with no clear explanation. We
16 should not be rewarding a company that cannot to the
17 bare minimum of giving an accurate bill. If Central
18 Hudson needs more money, I suggest they take it from
19 the billions of dollars in profit that they proudly
20 tout. Struggling people in our communities are
21 sitting here wondering why Central Hudson is asking
22 for more money when they -- when residential and non-
23 residential arrears are totaling over 125 million.
24 That's over a million dollars -- a \$100 million of
25 bills that community members and small businesses

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2 already can't pay. But Central Hudson is owned by
3 Canadian mega corporation, Fortis, which is worth \$58
4 billion. Why are we debating whether Central Hudson
5 exploit funds from our community? We should not be
6 rewarding utility monopolies that are incompetent,
7 negligent, and playing with people's lives all in the
8 name of their bottom dollar. I am urging the P.S.C.
9 strongly to deny Central Hudson's rate increase to
10 show that as a State, we refuse to put Central
11 Hudson's profits over our people. Instead, Central
12 Hudson should be forced to freeze their rates until
13 they can get their act together and perform as
14 utilities should. As a State, we should be moving
15 towards publicly accountable utilities and no longer
16 allow multibillion-dollar corporations to exploit the
17 vulnerable people of our community.

18 MALE VOICE: God bless America.

19 MS. DA CRUZ: Thank you.

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

21 Our next speaker is Jamie Sanin or Jamie Sanin. And
22 if you've -- oops, I think your line is now unmuted.

23 MS. SANIN: Hello.

24 A.L.J. MORENO: Hello. Now we can
25 hear you.

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2 MS. SANIN: Fabulous. Thank you so
3 much. Thank you so much to everyone who's spoken and
4 to the folks that are here for making the time to
5 listen. I represent an organization called
6 Celebrate845. We exist -- we are by and for
7 marginalized working class Hudson Valley creatives,
8 so artists. And as somebody who has grown up in the
9 Hudson Valley and lived here my entire life, I have
10 experienced a myriad of things through Central
11 Hudson. And I want to voice that the proposed hike
12 just can't -- it -- like it can't happen, like --
13 like folks -- folks that are -- that are on -- that
14 are like within my community, they won't be able to
15 afford it. They already can't. And it's not -- it's
16 not that they don't want to. It's not that their
17 spending money on other things. We're experiencing a
18 housing crisis. So rent have gone up astronomically.
19 We're experiencing inflation around the cost of food,
20 the cost of transportation, a lack of transportation.
21 So with these proposed -- with this proposal, its --
22 its not that folks don't want to pay their bills but
23 they can't. They can't because wages haven't gone up
24 and everything else has. So I'm just -- I'm really
25 echoing a lot of what other folks have said at this

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2 point. But I don't expect Central Hudson to -- to
3 care about, you know, the most impacted members of
4 our community. But I'm hoping that this, you know,
5 this committee, the folks -- the folks listening here
6 can -- can maybe step in and use some of their power
7 to stand up for these folks because these are your
8 neighbors. These -- you know, these might be your
9 co-workers. These might be people that live near
10 you. They need -- and they need utilities and -- and
11 can't access them if -- if this is how it's going to
12 happen. So I just want to say thanks again to
13 everyone for taking the time to tune in, and -- and
14 to listen to folks -- to folks on the committee.
15 Really, really appreciate your time, and thanks to
16 the -- the interpreter as well, really grateful for
17 everyone. Thank you.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much. We
19 appreciate it. Our next speaker will be Thomas
20 O'Connor. Thomas O'Connor. And if you've called in,
21 if you could press star three on your phone. Okay.
22 Our next speaker then would be Mie Inouye. And I
23 apologize if I had mispronounced that, M-I-E, the
24 last name I-N-O-U-Y-E. Okay. And again, if you've
25 called in, please press star three. Okay. Jonathan

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2 Flynn. And again, if you've called in, if you could
3 press star three. Melanie Crouch and I believe your
4 -- your line has been unmuted.

5 MS. CROUCH: Okay. Thank you for
6 letting me talk today. My name is Melanie Crouch. I
7 live in Hyde Park, New York. I'm in a household with
8 two people with disabilities, me and my autistic son.
9 Last year, I reduced my household usage of
10 electricity by over a thousand kilowatt-hours. Now
11 I'm going to give you approximate figures. My
12 written statement will have the full accurate
13 figures. My actual bill increased by over \$50 even
14 with the -- the reduction and use of power. This
15 year and the supplement that I get every -- every
16 month, that helps since I have HEAP, also reduced
17 this year. This coming year, we're only supposed to
18 be getting the 3.2 percent increase in our Social
19 Security benefits which from my household comes out
20 to \$64 a month. To achieve last year's decrease of a
21 thousand kilowatt hours, I had to reduce the use of
22 my scooter to just going to doctor's appointments.
23 Meaning I am trapped in the house unless there's an
24 emergency. Not using my O2 concentrator, meaning, I
25 could suffocate in my sleep. And not using my leg

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2 pumps so my legs have gotten to the point that I
3 almost can't stand to walk anymore. This year,
4 because of the increase of over \$50 a month, I've had
5 to stop using my nebulizer. I've had to stop taking
6 certain of my medications and certain my son's
7 special needs items are not being purchased anymore.
8 If this increase happens, we will not -- I -- I have
9 nowhere else to cut and we will even suffer even
10 further. I am not the only person in this situation.
11 This is for people with disabilities across the
12 board. I don't think an electric company or electric
13 usage should be able to have multimillion dollar
14 profits when people like me can't even afford to
15 breath. If I die this winter, I will make sure that
16 it's put on Central Hudson and other people that
17 price gouge at this point. I cannot afford this rate
18 increase and I doubt anybody else in -- that relies
19 on a fixed income can either. Thank you.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.
21 And I would want to just pause for a second if we can
22 proceed to the last side because I would like to
23 highlight for anyone that's joined us today, if they
24 are having trouble with their bill, there is
25 assistance available also from the Department of

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2 Public Service in addition to contacting the utility.
3 Erin, are you able to advance this slide please to
4 the last slide? And so I just want to tell or say
5 that the -- the help line number for assistance, for
6 complaints, for inquiries, if you have them about
7 your bill, you can contact the Department of Public
8 Service Consumer Assistance line at 1-800-342-3377.
9 Perfect. Okay. Our next speaker is Giselle Martinez
10 and your line has been unmuted.

11 MS. MARTINEZ: Hi. Can you hear me?

12 A.L.J. MORENO: We can. Thank you.

13 MS. MARTINEZ: Okay. Good afternoon.

14 My name is Giselle Martinez. Today, I am speaking on
15 behalf of my city council capacity. I am a council
16 member for the City of Newburgh and I'm also a State
17 employee. I wanted to express my concern with the --
18 with the hikes. Personally, I get a lot of
19 constituents, both from my State job and from my
20 council capacity, that complain about their Central
21 Hudson bills. And so an increase -- a 16.4 percent
22 increase for electric delivery services or a 19
23 percent increase for natural gas delivery services is
24 very concerning especially when cities like in
25 Newburgh are predominantly working class families.

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2 But again, you have folks living paycheck to
3 paycheck. And when people live in low income
4 households, a lot of the time, they have to sacrifice
5 whether it be food, whether it be other utilities
6 that they need or other necessities to have a basic
7 living. And so I would really like to express my
8 opposition for these hike increases. And again, to
9 see if there are any other alternatives or solutions.
10 I know I heard earlier the people mentioning solar
11 panels, which I am in big favor of. And again, would
12 like to ask the Public Service Commission to reject
13 this rate hike proposal. Thank you.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
15 Our next speaker will be Daniel Atonna. Daniel
16 Atonna. And if you've called in, if you could press
17 star three. Okay. And your line have been unmuted.

18 MR. ATONNA: Oh, hi. Can you hear me?

19 A.L.J. MORENO: Yes, we can now.

20 MR. ATONNA: All right. Thanks and
21 I'll start with my comment. Thank you. My name is
22 Daniel Atonna, he/him, and I live in the City of
23 Poughkeepsie and organize all throughout the mid-
24 Hudson Valley. I work at For the Many as their
25 political coordinator. And unfortunately, I am a

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2 Central Hudson customer. Last year, Central Hudson
3 attempted to charge me all -- almost \$600 for gas and
4 electric. This was about triple our usual bill, they
5 blamed it on a computer glitch. I know many For The
6 Many members who are also affected by these billing
7 errors as well. Now Central Hudson has the audacity
8 to demand yet another round of rate hikes. On their
9 website, Central Hudson lists their total 2022
10 electric and gas revenues as a little over a billion
11 dollars. Their proposed rate hikes would result in a
12 30 percent increase in their base delivery revenues.
13 Central Hudson's profits and monopoly are guaranteed
14 by the State. And that is why they operate with
15 impunity and without respect for their customers.
16 I'd like to echo the Hudson Valley D.S.A. in their
17 call for public power. The mass movement organized
18 around the recently passed bill Public Renewables Act
19 proves that New Yorkers are more interested in
20 investing in a public utility like the New York Power
21 Authority rather than a for-profit utility like
22 Central Hudson. As climate change continues to
23 worsen, its impact on our utility grid will continue
24 to grow. There are much needed investments Central
25 Hudson could be making such as burying power lines.

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2 But as a for-profit company, they don't think that
3 way. For-profit companies will only ever operate
4 under the principle of short term profit
5 maximization. Their primary concern is enriching
6 their C.E.O., Christopher Capone and their
7 shareholders. New Yorkers have to struggle every day
8 to pay their bills. We struggle so they can profit.
9 Does that sound fair to you? I'm calling on the
10 Public Service Commission to reject the rate hikes in
11 whole and I'm calling on any New York State
12 legislators watching this hearing to bring Central
13 Hudson under public control. Thank you.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
15 Our next speaker is Patrick Pellicano and your line
16 has been unmuted.

17 MR. PELLICANO: Hello. Thank you for
18 taking my comment today. I'm calling as a Central
19 Hudson customer. I have experienced some pretty
20 chaotic billing throughout the past three years, I
21 guess, since they implemented their new billing
22 system. But I'm also a huge critic of Central Hudson
23 because their business practices seem to be
24 disingenuous. And I don't think that calls for any
25 conceivable reward to the extent that they're

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2 requesting. Their former C.E.O. was making \$8
3 million or more every year. When he was asked to
4 step down by elective leadership and someone from the
5 board took over who I imagine makes somewhere in the
6 millions for his salary. Meanwhile, as previous
7 speakers have stated, people all over the Hudson
8 Valley can't even afford the basic, you know, basic
9 rate increases, not to mention the -- the chaotic
10 billing that comes with Central Hudson's practices.
11 I also get my energy through this organization called
12 Common Energy. It's -- it's a New York State -- I
13 don't know if it's a subsidiary or what it is. But
14 it's sort of an incentivized program where you can
15 choose that you're electric comes from solar or like,
16 you know, non-destructive or less destructive
17 elements. And Central Hudson has been horrible in
18 dealing with this State, you know, organized group.
19 They don't pass along information and it leads to
20 chaos and my bills are delayed for months. I have
21 two bills now, one for 50 bucks and one for \$1. And
22 then another month, I had three bills. It's just
23 absurd to try and keep track of what's supposed to go
24 on. That's why I -- you know, I call for a need to
25 democratize our energy system. We have no choice but

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2 to buy our energy from Central Hudson. And even
3 though I'm trying to get it through different means,
4 I'm still being stuck with their horrible practices.
5 So I don't think they should be allowed to increase
6 their rate -- their rate hike especially when the
7 I.P.C.C., the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate
8 Change has said that no more fossil fuel production
9 should happen. And yet they -- you know, they --
10 they claim that they need to make more gas
11 development happen. We don't live in a silo.
12 Everything is interconnected. If we haven't realized
13 that yet then we're doomed. So yeah, for this tiny
14 thing, please don't accept their rate hike because we
15 need to face climate change as it's making our
16 seasons chaotic and our lives a living hell. Thank
17 you.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
19 We'll next hear from Eric Eckley and Mr. Eckley, your
20 line has been unmuted. Eric Eckley and if you are
21 speaking, we can't hear you. Mr. Eckley. Okay. And
22 we will circle back. Our next speaker will be Alicia
23 Landis. Okay. And your line has been unmuted.

24 MS. LANDIS: Hello.

25 A.L.J. MORENO: Hi there.

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2 MS. LANDIS: Hi. Good afternoon. My
3 name is Alicia Landis and I'm the Supervisor of
4 Direct Services and Counsel for the Public Utility
5 Law Project or PULP and I go by she for pronouns.
6 PULP is a 40-year-old non-profit with a mission of
7 educating, advocating, and litigating on behalf of
8 New York State's low income H.L.D. customers. PULP
9 thanks the Department of Public Service for the
10 opportunity to testify in relation to Central
11 Hudson's gas and electric rate cases. In particular,
12 thank you for providing the hearing notice in Spanish
13 and providing interpretation support which is a very
14 important means in providing access for Spanish
15 speakers to learn about the case and have an
16 opportunity to comment on this process. PULP is an
17 active party in both cases and are planning to file
18 expert testimony on November 21st. PULP has several
19 concerns and a few of which we'll address in today's
20 hearing and will be expanded upon in our testimony.
21 Central Hudson is asking for double-digit increases
22 for its rate case. They're spinning it as a \$1 a day
23 for each electric and gas. But for those that are
24 both electric and gas customers, this would amount to
25 a \$60 increase a month. To put this under

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2 perspective, PULP pulled financial assistance from
3 the New York State Community Action Association's
4 2023 Poverty Report, the United Way's ALICE Project
5 and the New York State Department of Education County
6 Statistics. And also counting 49 percent of students
7 in Ulster County are eligible for free or reduced
8 lunch. Ten percent of households live in poverty
9 while 7.6 percent of people over the age of 65 and
10 15.9 percent of children in the county living in
11 poverty. In Dutchess County, 10 percent of households
12 live in poverty. The unemployment rate is 13.3
13 percent in the county and 39 percent of students are
14 eligible for free or reduced lunch. In Greene
15 County, 39.1 percent of families with a female head
16 of household with children present live in poverty
17 and the county has an unemployment rate of 14.1
18 percent. The fact of the matter is that customers of
19 Central Hudson's service territory cannot currently
20 afford their utility bills. While Central Hudson is
21 asking for an increase in rates plus a 9.8 percent
22 R.O.E. that they are portraying as the low end of
23 what they could potentially ask for.

24 PULP is also concerned about weather
25 protections. If climate change continues, we find it

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2 important that each utility company in the State have
3 extreme heat and cold weather protections for their
4 customers. And we will be expanding upon this in our
5 testimony. PULP has also underscored any domestic
6 violence protections. We are eager to learn about --
7 more about the company's policies and training
8 materials related to survivors. Every day ratepayers
9 are also struggling with bills that are unaffordable.
10 PULP asks the commission to scrutinize Central
11 Hudson's rate request to make sure that the rates
12 customers are paying are just, and reasonable,
13 affordable, and fair. Thank you for giving PULP the
14 opportunity to speak today.

15 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
16 That concludes the list that we have. Although there
17 was a number of individuals who were not available
18 when I called on them so we'll go back through that
19 list and see if anyone is now available. And we'll
20 start with Jonathan Jacobson. And I see -- I do not
21 see Jonathan Jacobson. Do we have -- if you called
22 in by phone, if you could press star three? And I
23 see we have a number of hands raised and just to let
24 those folks know when I -- after we go through the
25 list of registered folks, I will open it up so we

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2 will get to you at that point. Edmond Roberts and if
3 you've called in, if you could press star three.
4 Edmond Roberts. Kelsey Butterworth. And again, if
5 you've called in, if you could press star three.
6 Thomas O'Connor. And again, if you've called in, if
7 you could press star three, Thomas O'Connor. Mie
8 Inouye. And if you've called in, if you could press
9 star three. And Jonathan Flynn. And again, if
10 you've called in, if you could press star three.
11 Okay. I do not see those individuals who are
12 available at the moment. So what I will do is I will
13 open it up for anyone who is listening in today who
14 would like to make a statement that has not
15 registered to speak. If you would like to make a
16 statement this afternoon, if you are participating
17 electronically, you can use the raise hand function.
18 And if you are participating by phone and would like
19 to make a statement, please press star three on your
20 telephone. That will allow us to understand that
21 you'd like to make a comment. And with that, I see a
22 number of hands raised. I'll just also pause and
23 say, if there is anyone who is listening in on the
24 other line in Spanish, if you would like to make a
25 statement, please just take a moment and unmute your

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2 line to advise the interpreter that you would like to
3 make a statement. And I would just ask that if our
4 interpreter, if you have any folks who would like to
5 make a statement, if you could please use the raise
6 hand function for yourself and then we will move here
7 to hear their statement.

8 MS LUCY: Excuse me, interpreter.
9 Your Honor, just a friendly reminder to the speakers
10 to please just slow the speed of the speech. And --
11 and as of the moment, we don't have no Spanish
12 comments.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay. Thank you very
14 much. Okay. The first speaker we have is Clark
15 Goodrich. And as our interpreter indicated, if I
16 could just ask all of the speakers to try to slow
17 their pace. That would be much appreciated. Clark
18 Goodrich, your line has been unmuted.

19 MR. GOODRICH: Can you hear me?

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Yes, we can now.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. GOODRICH: All right. My name is
23 Clark Goodrich. Good afternoon. Thank you for
24 holding these meetings. Well, P.S.C. and Central
25 Hudson has to do a much better job at following

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2 Central Hudson's excessive delivery and energy supply
3 rates if there already is electric -- more to have
4 affordable electric power in the Hudson Valley as our
5 only source of energy fighting climate change here in
6 the Hudson Valley in the future. My main complaint
7 is comparing Central Hudson proposed rates are not
8 competitive with other power companies in Upstate New
9 York and other states. The -- the combined delivery
10 rate and energy supply rates will be doubled the cost
11 of electricity compared to the State of Florida, S-E-
12 C-O Energy. Also during the -- and that's double the
13 rate, and would double the bill, again, for Central
14 Hudson. Also, during the winter months, Central
15 Hudson Energy supply rates are significantly higher
16 than all the other Upstate New York power companies.
17 Compared to Syracuse for example, Central Hudson,
18 their rate is 75 percent higher. This is not
19 competitive. My second complaint with Central Hudson
20 today is the electric delivery percent increase,
21 which they document in the newspapers is not correct.
22 It's not even close. In the newspaper, Central
23 Hudson has asked for a 16 percent increase in the
24 deliverable. I'll skip the math here, but I've done
25 the math. At our personal residence which we use 600

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2 kilowatt-hours per month. Some of that is for heat,
3 our residential electric delivery charge, just the
4 delivery charge would increase 35 percent, not 16
5 percent. I would ask the P.S.C. to enforce new
6 requirements on the way the power companies report
7 rate increases to be more accurate and honest for
8 basic residential with customers that use heat, use
9 electricity for heat and those that do not use
10 electricity. They're going to see a significant
11 difference in the percent increase. My third
12 complaint is the delivery rate per kilowatt hour was
13 99.2 cents per kilowatt in June of 2022 with a
14 proposed rate of 14.7 cents per kilowatt hour and
15 that would be an increase on 60 percent in only, only
16 two years. This seems extremely high and
17 significantly higher than increases from other
18 electric power companies in Upstate New York over the
19 same time period. Thank you very much.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
21 Okay. Our next speaker will be Assemblyman Emil
22 Ethon. And your --

23 MR. ETHON: Hello everyone.

24 A.L.J. MORENO: Hi there. We can hear
25 you now.

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2 MR. ETHON: Perfect. Thank you very
3 much and I am -- I apologize for not pre-registering.
4 As always I thank you and your team over at the
5 Public Service Commission for your partnership and
6 support here. Much like the sentiments I relayed in
7 my letter earlier this month or last month rather,
8 I'd just like to express those same sentiments here
9 today. So I'm here to express my opposition to
10 Central Hudson's proposed rate increase. As a
11 representative of the residents of Dutchess County,
12 I've witnessed first-hand the direct and negative
13 impact that the rising cost of energy, coupled with
14 Central Hudson's billing practices, rather, faulty
15 billing practices, and the C.L.C.P.A. has had on our
16 community. The well-being of our residents is
17 paramount. And I urge the Public Service Commission
18 to carefully consider the potential implications of
19 approving such a substantial rate increase. Many of
20 our community members are -- are already facing
21 financial challenges and uncertainties and this rate
22 hike could exacerbate any of those difficulties
23 they're currently going through. I request that the
24 Commission thoroughly reviews the rate case and
25 considers the hardships it may impose on our

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2 residents. Ensuring fair and just utility rates is
3 vital to safeguarding the interest of our community
4 and preserving the quality of life here in New York
5 State, especially the Hudson Valley. So as always --
6 I thank you all for your time and your effort here.
7 And on behalf of our community, please consider this
8 to be my strong opposition to a rate increase. Thank
9 you all.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
11 Our next speaker is Charles Pulley. And I do not see
12 -- okay. Our next speaker will be a call-in user.
13 I'm going to unmute your line now. And your line has
14 been unmuted. Hopefully, you heard a beep on your
15 end.

16 MR. PASCOCELLO: Yes. Good afternoon.
17 My name is Dain Pascocello, Chief of Staff for State
18 Senator Rob Rolison. Senator Rolison had pre-
19 registered but he had to leave to go to another
20 event. So I will be reading this statement into the
21 record on his behalf.

22 I'd like to begin by thanking the
23 Public Service Commission for holding this initial
24 series of public statement hearings. Public inputs
25 such as the comments offered today will be critical

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2 in determining the reasonableness of this proposed
3 rate hike. Thank you also to Judges Costello and
4 Moreno for hearing my testimony and is passionately
5 presiding over this important matter of public
6 policy.

7 My district in the Hudson Valley faces
8 an affordability crisis cross-associated with
9 housing, childcare, groceries, and energy have all
10 increased. According to the latest Sienna Research
11 Institute poll, more than 80 percent of New York's
12 voters considered the rising cost of living to be a
13 major problem. My constituents shouldn't have to
14 choose between a doctor's visit, and feeding a family
15 of four, between lighting and heating their home, and
16 filling up the gas tank to get to work. Central
17 Hudson's proposed rate increases of 16 percent on the
18 average residential electric bill and 19 percent on
19 the average natural gas bill to take effect the
20 summer of 2024 is unacceptable. I believe that this
21 rate hike would be too much, too fast for our Hudson
22 Valley homeowners and residents. Therefore, I
23 respectfully request that the Commission reject the
24 proposed increase amount. It is my opinion that
25 stakeholders working with local partners can craft a

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2 better solution which meets the needs of our region's
3 and State's growing energy demands while protecting
4 rate payers who are already squeezed by inflation and
5 higher costs nearly everywhere else.

6 To that end, I have spoken with
7 Central Hudson's leadership on several occasions to
8 express my concerns and work collaboratively --
9 collaboratively toward a better outcome. But I've
10 also visited with and spoken to NYISO, the Albany
11 area non-profit responsible for operating our State's
12 electric grid. Ultimately, their concerns that the
13 structural pressures being placed on energy supply,
14 thanks to the rushed Climate Leadership and Community
15 Protection Act would lead to higher cost in our
16 State's middle class. I've met with a local small
17 business selling natural gas-powered fireplaces that
18 risk loss of its current product line and related
19 jobs thanks to Albany's ill-considered natural gas
20 ban. You cannot manage what you can't measure. I do
21 not believe those in charge of New York's energy
22 policy have reckoned with the dramatic immediate
23 costs associated with its long-term promises. It's
24 time to pause and responsibly assess the consequences
25 before we leave our State's middle class behind. One

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2 suggestion I will offer today to ease the burden of
3 rising energy cost on families and individuals is to
4 expand the P.S.C.'s Energy Affordability Program
5 financial relief to more New Yorkers. As you know,
6 the E.A.P. is currently paid to Federal -- to Federal
7 poverty level and provides a monthly discount on
8 utility bills. My district office has completed or
9 engaged over 100 cases of utility billing assistance
10 since I entered the State Senate in January. The
11 majority of this casework involves middle income New
12 Yorkers unable to pay their electricity and heating
13 bills. I am calling on the P.S.C. to streamline the
14 enrollment process and make these discounts available
15 to more of our middle-income residents who are
16 struggling with month-to-month payments. In closing,
17 let me say that I am relieved that the Commission has
18 heeded our call to provide in-person public comment
19 hearings to everyday New Yorker's concern about
20 higher energy prices. I look forward to joining them
21 as we continue this critical conversation together.
22 Thank you.

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

24 And could I just ask you a favor? Could you please
25 spell your name and the senator's just so we have it

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2 clear for the record?

3 MR. PASCOCELLO: State Senator Rob, R-
4 O-B, Rolison, R-O-L-I-S-O-N and my name is Dain, D-A-
5 I-N, Pascocello, P as in Peter, A-S-C-O-C-E-L-L-O.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much. We
7 appreciate your comment. Our next speaker is also a
8 call-in user. We'll unmute your line. Hopefully,
9 you will hear a beep. And your line is --

10 MR. BOEING: Yes. Thank you. Can you
11 hear me now?

12 A.L.J. MORENO: Yes, we can. If you
13 could please just state your --

14 MR. BOEING: Okay.

15 A.L.J. MORENO: -- your name and then
16 proceed to make your statement.

17 MR. BOEING: Yes. My name is Charles
18 Boeing. I live in Kingston, New York and I am also
19 unfortunately a Central Hudson customer. I've heard
20 many things that have been said here. One of the
21 things I'd like to bring up is historical. Many
22 years ago when the cost of gas and diesel went well
23 over \$5 a gallon, many companies had to propose rate
24 hikes due to increased fuel costs. Central Hudson
25 was given such a cost increase due to the enhanced

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2 fuel cost, somewhat understandable at the time.
3 However, when fuel cost came back down, they did not
4 drop their bill back down. So I think the customers
5 are entitled to a refund of that for that period.
6 More recently than that, when the Knicker Station
7 closed, Central Hudson again raised the rates in
8 citing increased demand. Simultaneously, New York
9 State was pushing for its residents to move to solar
10 and helping them in many ways. Increasing due to
11 increased demand, I think is a definition of price
12 gouging. I've known -- I've talked to many people,
13 have fully gone over to solar, and can prove that
14 they are actually generating more electricity than
15 they're using. However, Central Hudson continued to
16 bill them. Between a move to solar and, as you've
17 already heard on this call, many people have
18 voluntarily reduced their utility usage, how can they
19 can state that there's an increase in demand? Yet,
20 they still got into a substantial increase. More
21 recently, Central Hudson pushed out a faulty
22 financial package that caused errors in billing.
23 Mistakes happening in programming, okay, however I
24 find it very coincidental that after that, after
25 whatever potential profits they may have lost and the

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2 me?

3 A.L.J. MORENO: We can now. Thank
4 you.

5 MR. RATH: Okay. Thank you. I'm a
6 Central Hudson customer in Poughkeepsie. I live in a
7 very small, 350 square foot apartment, and friends
8 will tell you, I'm probably one of the most
9 conservative people they know. I turn off my -- my
10 power cords at night. I use a solar oven in the
11 summer so I'm cooking with the -- the sun and not my
12 gas. And -- and I do everything to keep my -- my
13 bills low.

14 I've weathered the inconsistencies of
15 the billing process that happened during COVID and
16 afterwards and I think they're straightened out.
17 Although I will tell you it was very, very
18 frustrating trying to work through those. And if --
19 if I'm reading my statements correctly and also the
20 notice that came in the bill about the rate
21 increases. My -- my rates are going to more than
22 double on the delivery charges. So it's not a 16
23 percent increase. It's -- it's more than doubling.
24 So there's no -- no reward for my -- other than
25 psychological, for my conservation.

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2 The other thing, while I'm not an
3 expert in utility finances and things, I have a sense
4 that there's a big concern for the rating agencies
5 and I get a little bit of that. But in every other
6 corporation that -- that doesn't perform up to snuff,
7 the shareholders and the company have to pay a
8 penalty. I guess, I don't see that happening when
9 you getting the kind of rate increases or considering
10 the kind of rate increases that Central Hudson --
11 Hudson is asking for. Where -- why shouldn't the
12 stakeholders and the company -- I'm sorry, the
13 shareholders and the company pay a penalty for lack
14 of performance? And I do appreciate the opportunity
15 to -- to comment.

16 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much. We
17 appreciate it. Our next speaker will be Eric Eckley
18 and your line has been unmuted.

19 MR. ECKLEY: Hi. Thank you very much.
20 Yeah, my name is Eric Eckley. I live in East
21 Fishkill in Dutchess County, New York. I mean,
22 electric rates are high now, right? People are
23 having a hard time paying their bills now. You know,
24 Fortis, Central Hudson's parent company made \$1.2
25 billion in profits and after their expenses in -- in

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2 2021. And they increased their profits to 1.3
3 billion in 2022. So they're doing a great job for
4 shareholders just the way things are. There's no
5 reason to raise rates. The company is extremely
6 profitable. And, you know, as other people have said
7 on the call, like Central Hudson has not been doing a
8 great job, you know, managing, you know, people's
9 accounts. And its caused all kinds of stress to
10 people. Well, probably paid way too much too in many
11 cases and, you know, arguing that they need to make a
12 16 percent increase in rates when the company is also
13 extremely profitable is ridiculous.

14 You know, nobody gets a 16 percent
15 raise. You know, right now, inflation is 3.7
16 percent. So if they ask for a 3.7 percent increase,
17 like that might even be reasonable. But 16 percent,
18 you know, that's just -- that's like a like slap in
19 the face to all of us that -- that have to pay thee
20 bills. Where I work, you know, we got a 3.5 percent
21 raise for next year. I know other people that work
22 in the same industry, I work for a college, a local
23 college, and then their college is are offering them
24 a 2.5 percent raise next year.

25 And the inflations is 3.5 percent

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2 right now. So like the economy does not support
3 this, you know, raise that Central Hudson wants.
4 It's ridiculous. You know, there's not really a lot
5 left to say, you know. It's going to hurt the
6 citizens in the Hudson Valley. People are going to
7 lose their homes. Like the number one way people
8 lose their homes is by not being able to pay their
9 utility bills. They fall behind in their water bill
10 or some other bill and eventually, they, you know,
11 they lose their home over it. And that's going to
12 happen if you let this take place. It's going to
13 cripple our local economy and it's going to cripple
14 small business. It's a very bad -- you know, it's a
15 very bad time for this. I don't think that there's
16 any time in Central Hudson where most companies
17 there, like, utility companies, you know, supplying
18 things that people desperately need to -- to live,
19 you know, heat, elect -- you know, light. I mean,
20 people can't live without this stuff. And 16 percent
21 increase is just, you know, it's abusive and it's
22 unnecessary and they don't deserve it. Thank you.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
24 Okay. I believe that I do not see any further
25 members of the public who have indicated that they

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2 would like to make a statement. But I will open it
3 up once again. If you are listening in today and you
4 would like to make a statement, we're very happy to
5 hear it. And if you are participating
6 electronically, if you could use the raise hand
7 function. And if you are calling in, if you could
8 press star three on your telephone, we'd be happy to
9 hear your comment.

10 Also, if you are participating on our
11 other phone line in Spanish, if you would like to
12 make a statement, please let the interpreter know.
13 And we will ask the interpreter if you could please
14 use the raise hand function so that we know whether
15 you have any folks that would like to make a
16 statement on the record. And I do see we have a
17 couple of individuals who would like to make
18 statements, they are both call-in users. So I have
19 unmuted your line. Hopefully, you heard a beep.

20 MS. CASEY: I did. Hi. My name is
21 Laura Casey. I am a town of Poughkeepsie resident,
22 but I am also the executive director for a local
23 nonprofit in the City of Poughkeepsie both Central
24 Hudson, you know, both -- both of those are supplied
25 by Central Hudson. I'm going to be brief. I missed

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2 the beginning of this call so I apologize if some of
3 this stuffs has been repeated.

4 But I think my biggest concern is that
5 the billing errors were obviously very detrimental
6 especially to someone like myself dealing with the
7 nonprofit that's on a -- a budget. You know, you
8 have -- I have my in-laws who are in Hyde Park who
9 are also on Central Hudson who are seniors on a fixed
10 income. And I'm -- to be quite frank, quite worried
11 about how they're going to heat their home this
12 winter. And -- and, you know, have basic needs,
13 basic human needs. This area has been extremely
14 difficult to survive in. I, you know, make a decent
15 salary. I work really hard for a living. My husband
16 works hard for a living. And we are actually getting
17 to the point where we're contemplating moving out of
18 the State of New York because between food and
19 Central Hudson and all the other inflation and
20 gentrification, things that we're dealing with now in
21 the Dutchess County area, it -- it's just made it
22 almost impossible to live here anymore which is it's
23 just -- it's sad.

24 So when I saw double digit increases
25 for Central Hudson, I -- I don't even know like there

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2 open it up again. If you are participating
3 electronically today and you would like to make a
4 statement, you can use the raise hand function so
5 that we can identify you and unmute your line. If
6 you have called in and would like to make a
7 statement, if you could press star three. And I
8 think we have another call in user and your line has
9 been unmuted.

10 MS. ALBERT: Hello? Yes. My name is
11 Kathy Albert and I live in Stoneridge, New York. And
12 I thought I registered yesterday before four thirty.
13 I'm sure I made that phone call and somehow it didn't
14 get through to you. So I'm glad to speak with you
15 now.

16 I am a retired person, and I have a
17 handicap, and I'm a living on a fixed income. And I
18 was alarmed to read that Central Hudson believes that
19 their inadequacy has not caused a financial hardship
20 on anyone. However, it certainly has as you can tell
21 from all the previous callers this afternoon. I've
22 been a customer of Central Hudson since 1967. I've
23 never been delinquent with my payments. I live
24 alone. I don't have company. All my relatives live
25 300 miles away. I do my own laundry about once a

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2 month and save it all up and do it once. All my
3 appliances are energy stars. In the -- in the cold
4 months, I set my thermostat at 68 and I don't change
5 it until spring. I've worn three and four layers
6 since I've got the cold.

7 I've had numerous power outages, two
8 within the past week in fact. There's never a
9 reimbursement for loss of service and yet this area
10 loses their service on a regular basis. One winter
11 in the past ten years, I went dark for two weeks. No
12 reimbursement or loss for service. In 2021, I was
13 hospitalized and I was put in a nursing home for
14 three -- five months and while I was gone, nobody
15 lived at my house. And it sat empty the whole time
16 until I was released from the nursing home. And the
17 amount of bills that came in while I was in the
18 nursing home and nobody was here amounted to
19 \$1,442.52. I have met with representatives once and
20 I've talked to representatives on the phone and I
21 never get anywhere. I also read that they are
22 supposed to stop using estimated readings and yet, so
23 three days ago when I got my most recent bill, they
24 are still using estimated billing.

25 The -- let's see. I have some notes

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2 here that I'm reading off of. I have never seen a
3 meter reader. When I met with the lady from Central
4 Hudson, she said that it's -- the delivery rate is
5 what was pushing up my bill. And however, there was
6 no way to fix the delivery rate. And I believe that
7 Central Hudson should not increase their rates until
8 all of us customers are paid for all the overage that
9 they owe us. And I'm sorry that I have to report
10 such bad news. I don't like doing this. But I'm
11 still waiting for a reimbursement for my overpaid
12 amounts. They seemed to pass the buck to the
13 delivery charge which they claim not to be in charge
14 of. And I -- believe the rate increase is a slap in
15 the face for those of us who suffered with Central
16 Hudson since 1920 -- 2020.

17 A few of the overage charges have been
18 \$509, 487, 842, \$779, 536, 525, 750, 781, 622, 592.
19 I live alone. I'm frugal with my electric usage. I
20 remember the campaign, save a watt, turn off lights
21 when you're not in that room and so forth. And I've
22 been a proponent of that ever since. However, this
23 is really got a lot of people dialing out and I hope
24 you certainly can help us. And I appreciate you
25 taking the time to hear my concerns. Thank you very

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2 much. Good-bye.

3 A.L.J. MORENO: Well, thank you.
4 Okay. Oh, good-bye. Thank you so much for taking
5 the time to share your comments today. And I know
6 that you mentioned that you've had some trouble
7 reaching Central Hudson and I just wanted to ask our
8 -- the last slide be displayed, if possible that has
9 some information on it. So if you are having trouble
10 with your bill and you've not been able to resolve it
11 with Central Hudson, consumers are more than welcome
12 to also contact the Department of Public Service
13 Consumer Assistance line. And that number is 1-800-
14 342-3377. And just again, that's -- the help line
15 number for complaints and inquiries, also perhaps to
16 help you resolve billing issues, you can reach the
17 Department of Public Service Consumer Assistance line
18 at 1-800-342-3377. And there are staff members who
19 are available between eight thirty a.m. and four
20 o'clock p.m. to -- to help with any inquiry that you
21 might have.

22 Okay. I don't see any more folks who
23 are indicating that they would like to make a
24 statement. But I will open it up again. If you are
25 participating electronically and you would like to

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2 not seeing any other hands raised.

3 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.

4 MS. LUCY: You're welcome.

5 A.L.J. MORENO: Well, with that then,
6 I would just like to remind members of the public
7 that they may submit public comments throughout this
8 case by the other means that were described earlier
9 and are in the notice of the public statement hearing
10 that was issued on August 18, 2023.

11 For those of you participating
12 electronically, those other ways to comment are also
13 available on your screen. We will be holding some
14 additional statement hearings. There will be another
15 virtual public statement hearing this evening at five
16 o'clock. And we will be holding in-person public
17 statement hearings in the future and in notice, that
18 includes the locations, dates, and times will also be
19 issued in the near future.

20 So with that, Judge Costello and I
21 would like to thank you very much for your
22 participation and for your comments this afternoon.
23 We appreciate hearing from you. Also our thanks to
24 Commissioner Maggiore for being present as well as
25 our consumer services officer for administering the

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2 sessions, our court reporter, and thanks very much as
3 well to our interpreter. So with that, please have a
4 good afternoon. Our hearing is now concluded and
5 we'll go off the record.

6 THE REPORTER: We are off the record.

7 (Off-the-record)

8 (The hearing concluded at 2:37 p.m.)

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2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 I, ANTHONY MCCLAIN, do hereby certify that the foregoing
4 was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
5 as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
6 the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
7 pages 1 through 60, is a true record of all proceedings
8 had at the hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 27th day of September, 2023.

11

12 ANTHONY MCCLAIN, Reporter

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