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Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Via email comments@utc.wa.gov and utility@atg.wa.gov

Commissioners,

On behalf of the Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association (SICBA) we are writing to express our concerns regarding Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) proposed electric and natural gas rate increases for the next two years. (Dockets UE-240004, UG-240005 and UE-230810).

In Skagit County, we are primarily concerned about the electric rate increase because natural gas is offered by a different purveyor.

Over the past years, Skagit County has seen an increase in residents requiring and receiving assistance in meeting their utility cost obligations. This assistance has been made possible through different community agencies such as Community Action, etc. and even programs through PSE itself. This increase is directly related to the increased cost of rent, groceries and various other required services such as medical.

We will not burden you with the statistics that have already been provided by other input on this matter, but Skagit County does reflect the same percentages of financial hardships that are identified by other agencies who provide services and who provide housing for our citizenry.

Increased operating costs are the primary justification for rate increases but we think this is not only applicable to PSE. Every business and household have faced inflationary increases in all markets including competitive markets that do not permit unchecked price increases. We totally agree with the statement made by the Building Industry Association of Washington in that "PSE's status as a regulated monopoly should come with a heightened sense of responsibility, not the ability to pass poorly planned financial burdens onto consumers without accountability."

While natural gas is offered in our area through another provider, we see the same issues as we have identified for the electrical increase affecting those using natural gas in other regions where PSE is the purveyor of that utility.

Given the aforementioned information and data provided by other agencies, we strongly urge the Commission to put the real-life impact on struggling citizens within their area of coverage first and foremost; and reject PSE's proposed rate increases for both 2025 and 2026. We encourage PSE and the Commission to explore other paths that will ensure PSE is successful and can maintain its operations without further burdening Washingtonians in their area of service.

Thank you for your consideration and we feel comfortable that the Commission will seriously consider all the facts provided to them and make the best decision possible for Washingtonians.

Thank you,

Charles W. Crider
Executive Director
Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association

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