



October 8, 2024

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Via email comments@utc.wa.gov and utility@atg.wa.gov

RE: PSE GRC Revision

Dear Commissioners,

The Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (MBAKS) takes pride in building communities. Our 2,400 members are professional homebuilders, architects, remodelers, tradespeople, planners, engineers, suppliers, manufacturers, and sales and marketing professionals in your community. We believe everyone deserves a place to call home.

MBAKS is writing to express our significant concerns regarding Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) proposed rate increases for 2025 and 2026 (Dockets UE-240004, UG-240005, and UE-230810). These increases pose a direct threat to housing affordability in Washington, which is already under severe strain.

PSE's proposed rate hikes would raise monthly electric bills by an average of \$19.04 (\$228.48 annually) and natural gas bills by \$15.47 (\$185.64 annually). Though these figures may seem modest, they represent yet another cost increase for Washington families already struggling to afford basic living expenses. Housing costs, including utilities, are a central factor in overall affordability, and further escalating utility rates will only push more families to the financial brink.

Washington is in the midst of a housing affordability crisis, where **23%** of middle-income earners are rent-burdened, and **73%** of families cannot afford to buy a home. Many households are already forced to choose between covering essential expenses like heating their homes or affording food. With **64%** of PSE customers struggling to make utility payments, adding additional financial burdens will make housing even less attainable.

While PSE attributes these increases to rising operational costs, this rationale is not sufficient to justify passing the burden onto consumers. Every business faces inflationary pressures, yet in competitive markets, unchecked price increases are not tolerated. As a regulated monopoly, PSE should be held to a higher standard of accountability, particularly considering the profound impact these rate hikes will have on housing affordability.

We urge the Commission to reject PSE's proposed rate increases and instead explore alternative solutions that balance the utility's operational needs with the imperative to keep housing and living costs manageable for Washington families. Protecting affordability should remain the priority, not increasing shareholder profits at the expense of already struggling households.



Thank you for your consideration. We trust the Commission will prioritize the financial well-being of Washingtonians and protect housing affordability from further erosion.

Sincerely,



Dylan Sluder
State Government Affairs Manager
Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties