

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND  
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,**

**Complainant,**

**v.**

**PUGET SOUND ENERGY,**

**Respondent.**

**DOCKET UE-200980**

**TESTIMONY OF**

**SHAWN M. COLLINS (EXH. SMC-1T)**

**DIRECTOR OF  
THE ENERGY PROJECT**

*In Support of Settlement Stipulation*

**April 2, 2021**

1 I. INTRODUCTION

2 **Q: Please state your name and business address.**

3 A: I am Shawn Collins. My business address is 3406 Redwood Avenue, Bellingham,  
4 WA 98225.

5 **Q: By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

6 A: I am the Director of The Energy Project (TEP), a program of the Washington  
7 State Community Action Partnership housed at the Opportunity Council in  
8 Bellingham, WA. I have served as the Director since 2015.

9 **Q: How long have you been employed by the Opportunity Council.**

10 A: I have been employed by the Opportunity Council since 2006.

11 **Q: Would you please state your educational and professional background?**

12 A: Prior to joining TEP I held several positions with Opportunity Council including  
13 Associate Director of the Home Improvement Department, Community Energy  
14 Challenge Manager, and Community Services Outreach and Development  
15 Coordinator. I have been working on issues impacting low-income populations  
16 since 2002 through Community Action Partnership organizations and a variety of  
17 other nongovernmental entities. I am a member of the Bonneville Power  
18 Administration Low-Income Energy Efficiency Workgroup Steering Committee,  
19 the Washington State Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Advisory  
20 Committee, and the Washington State Low-Income Weatherization Advisory  
21 Committee. Through my involvement with the energy efficiency/regulatory  
22 sector, I have attended and presented at numerous national conferences,

1 participated in sector specific workshops and trainings, and was a board member  
2 for Home Performance Washington from 2013-2015.

3 I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Eastern Illinois University with a  
4 major in English and a minor in Philosophy. I have provided testimony on behalf  
5 of TEP before the Commission in multiple cases, including recently in the  
6 Cascade Natural Gas 2020 General Rate Case (GRC) (Docket UG-200568), the  
7 PacifiCorp 2019 GRC (Docket UE-191024), the Puget Sound Energy 2019 GRC  
8 (UE-190529/UG-190530) and the Avista 2019 GRC (UE-190334/UG-190335).

9 **Q: On whose behalf are you testifying?**

10 A: I am testifying for TEP, an intervenor in this proceeding, on behalf of Puget  
11 Sound Energy's (PSE) low-income customers and on behalf of the Community  
12 Action Partnership (CAP) organizations that provide low-income energy  
13 efficiency and bill payment assistance for these customers in PSE's service  
14 territory. These agencies include:

- 15 • Byrd Barr Place
- 16 • Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason, Thurston
- 17 • Community Action of Skagit County
- 18 • Hopelink
- 19 • Hopesource
- 20 • Metropolitan Development Council
- 21 • Multi-Service Center
- 22 • Kitsap Community Resources

- 1 • Opportunity Council
- 2 • Pierce County Community Action
- 3 • Snohomish County Community Action.

4 **II. PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY**

5 **Q: Could you please summarize the purpose of your testimony?**

6 A: The purpose of my testimony is to provide support for approval of the Settlement  
7 Stipulation and Agreement (Settlement) in this docket. My testimony focuses on  
8 the elements of the Settlement that impact low-income populations within PSE's  
9 service territory and explains why TEP believes the Settlement is in the public  
10 interest.

11 **III. DISCUSSION OF LOW-INCOME ISSUES**

12 **Q: Can you provide an overview of the key element of the Settlement that**  
13 **addresses low-income issues.**

14 A: The Settlement includes a specific component benefitting low-income customers,  
15 providing for an increase in the funding for PSE's Home Energy Lifeline Program  
16 (HELP).

1 **Q: Please describe the increase to HELP funding provided for in the Settlement.**

2 A: Section III.F of paragraph 11 of the Settlement adopts the parties' agreement for  
3 an increase in low-income bill assistance. Specifically, the parties agree to an  
4 increase in the annual level of low-income electric assistance under the permanent  
5 HELP program by twice the percentage increase in the residential customer base  
6 rate approved by the Commission, with a minimum increase of \$1 million. The  
7 formula of twice the percentage of the residential customer base rate increase is  
8 consistent with the method approved in PSE's last GRC,<sup>1</sup> and with the formula  
9 long in use for Avista's Low Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP).<sup>2</sup> Based  
10 on the amounts included in this settlement before updating for power costs, this  
11 will result in an increase to low-income HELP assistance of approximately \$1.2  
12 million (5.6 percent). The specific amount of the increase will be determined  
13 after the power cost update has been provided.

14 **Q: When will the increase take effect?**

15 A: The agreement provides that the increase would become effective with the next  
16 Schedule 129 rate change on October 1, 2021, as proposed by PSE.<sup>3</sup> The increase  
17 will take effect for the upcoming 2021/2022 HELP program year which begins  
18 October 1, 2021. The new funding will therefore be in place for the next winter  
19 heating season.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission v. Puget Sound Energy*, Dockets UE-190529/UG-190530, Final Order 08, ¶ 543 (July 8, 2020)(PSE 2019 GRC).

<sup>2</sup> *Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission v. Avista Corp.*, Dockets UE-190334/UG-190335 and UE-190222 (consolidated), Final Order 09, Appendix A, Partial Multiparty Settlement Stipulation, ¶ 14(b) (March 25, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Prefiled Direct Testimony of Kenneth S. Johnson, Exh. KSJ-1T at 14:4-6.

1 **Q: Please explain why this increase is in the public interest.**

2 A: This provision of the Settlement will help to address the substantial level of unmet  
3 need for bill assistance among low-income residents of the PSE service territory.  
4 Even before the pandemic, the number of PSE residential customers meeting the  
5 low-income eligibility requirements for the HELP program exceeded one quarter  
6 million. While HELP enrollment has been increasing, many of these eligible  
7 customers are not yet receiving assistance. With the onset of the pandemic,  
8 customer economic need has increased even more, and low-income customers are  
9 the “hardest hit,” as the Commission has recognized.<sup>4</sup> Puget Sound Energy’s  
10 testimony in this case recognized “the challenges its customers face with respect  
11 to the pandemic and the economic downturn that it caused”<sup>5</sup> and proposed an  
12 increase in HELP funding, albeit at a somewhat lower level.<sup>6</sup> Additional funding  
13 will help meet this need, especially as economic effects of the pandemic are  
14 expected to linger. This added funding will complement efforts to assist  
15 customers under the temporary COVID-19 programs recently approved March 25  
16 in Dockets UE-210137/UG-210138, provide modest growth and stability to the  
17 permanent HELP program, and provide a proportionate mitigation for the rate  
18 increases proposed in this docket. For a residential customer using the PSE  
19 average of 900 kWh per month, the electric bill would increase by \$2.73 per  
20 month. Higher volume users at 1000 kWh per month would see a bill increase of

---

<sup>4</sup> *PSE 2019 GRC*, Final Order 08, ¶ 543.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Exh. KSJ-1T at 13:12-13.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Exh. KSJ-1T at 13:19-14:6.

