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9/1/09

To: Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Re: Response to Puget Sound Energy's Proposed Customer Notice Procedures
Docket's UE-090704 and UG-090705
In support of The Energy Project's Response

The Multi-Service Center is a Community Action agency which has served the low-income community throughout South King County since 1971. Utilizing a Family Development Model MSC staff works with our constituents to help families achieve greater independence and discover the power of their choices. This past year we will have served over 18,000 families representing over 53,000 individuals. Our work includes: Energy Assistance (including federal LIHEAP dollars and PSE's HELP program dollars); an array of Housing services (including emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency assistance and rent assistance, and permanent low-income housing for both families and seniors); adult and youth education; Literacy services (including one-on-one tutoring and workplace literacy); and the Long Term Care Ombudsman program (representing vulnerable adults.) Our Energy Assistance program assisted over 8,400 households last year with either LIHEAP and/or PSE's HELP program. When this year is over we will have served significantly more households.

In short, MSC is quite familiar with the nature and challenges of low-income people. Our Family Development Model builds on the strengths of families to help them achieve self-determination and our agency mission stresses our commitment to help families achieve greater independence by discovering the power of their choices. To that end, we know that families must become involved in their own destiny. The challenge is to help families take that step of involvement by speaking on their own behalf. These are families who struggle every step of the way every single day. They struggle to travel without cars, feed their families with little food, work with transportation, and pay their bills with less than adequate income. Trying to understand Utility Rate Cases, let alone respond to them through testifying or attending budget hearings, in most instances is simply beyond their level of time and energy.

This often disenfranchised group would benefit greatly from a simple tear-off card to give them a voice. It's not so much that they have nothing to say, they just don't know how to say it, whom to say it to, or exactly what to say. But they have a general idea and most have a desire to be heard. This easy-to-use tear-off card would give these low-income people a much wanted and needed voice and an opportunity to participate in significant decisions that have a very strong impact on their lives.

MSC has enjoyed a long and positive relationship with Puget Sound Energy and our customers benefit greatly from PSE's HELP program. We have found PSE responsive to customer needs and cooperative to work with. We join the Energy Project in urging PSE to adopt the use of a simple tear-off card to give a voice to PSE constituents.

Sincerely,

Linda Purlee, Dir. Emergency Services

