

Public Service Commission,

Dear Chairman Phillips, Commissioner Beverly, and Ms. Westbrook-Sedgwick,

My name is Janeese Lewis George, and I am the incoming Ward 4 Councilmember. I am writing to voice my strong opposition to FC 1156.

While this should go without saying, Ward 4, like our city and our country, is in the midst of a protracted, devastating crisis. Over the last eight months, we have experienced skyrocketing unemployment, displacement, and widespread suffering. At present, as COVID cases continue to rise and the city considers further rolling back re-opening, we are bracing for the crushing economic hardship. There could not be a worse time to raise prices.

According to a statement released recently by the Office of the People's Counsel, "Pepco has claimed that it is 'freezing rates' for all customers until 2022, but if the Commission approves the MRP, commercial customers will see an immediate 60-70% increase in the volumetric portion of their bill." Our residents, a quarter of whom qualified for energy assistance before the pandemic, simply cannot afford that.

It has only gotten worse since. According to WePowerDC, "At the end of August, Pepco reported that over 50,000 customers—one in six customers in the District—have fallen into debt with Pepco during the pandemic. By contrast, Pepco Holdings made \$220 million worth of profits in the third quarter, up from \$209 million last year." We should be doing more to help struggling District residents, not forcing them to further subsidize a wealthy and powerful corporation.

We also recently learned that the Council is considering ending the utility shutoff moratorium, requiring every District resident unable to pay utility bills to enter into a payment plan with their provider. In Ward 4, this means that our economically disadvantaged residents, already saddled with a mountain of utility debt, will be forced to contend with a dramatic increase in electricity costs. This will disproportionately affect seniors and working class people of color, who have borne the economic and medical brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is unacceptable.

Furthermore, Pepco remains hostile to Ward 4's energy priorities. Pepco has made clear to OPC that this price hike will not fund clean energy development. Commissioner Beverly recently referred to their proposal as "underwhelming" with regards to its consistency with the District's climate and clean energy goals. That is an understatement. A price increase which passes significant costs onto marginalized Ward 4 residents and fails to move the needle on clean energy is a racial and climate justice disaster.

Nothing about Pepco's proposal is in the public interest. In fact, it would be actively harmful to Washington, D.C.'s most vulnerable people. Please reject FC 1156 in full.

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