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**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking to Address
Energy Utility Customer Bill Debt
Accumulated During the COVID-19
Pandemic.

R.21-02-014
(Filed February 11, 2021)

**CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY CHOICE ASSOCIATION'S
COMMENTS ON ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER'S
SCOPING MEMO AND RULING**

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March 22, 2021

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Pursuant to the *Assigned Commissioner's Scoping Memo and Ruling* filed March 15, 2021 (Scoping Memo), the California Community Choice Association¹ (CalCCA) submit these Comments.

I. INTRODUCTION

CalCCA supports the list of questions included in the Scoping Memo, covering topics such as which customer classes should receive debt relief, what types of relief are effective, and what is the involvement of third-party energy providers. The list of questions² is nearly comprehensive; CalCCA suggests adding two additional issues to the Scoping Memo of this proceeding:

¹ California Community Choice Association represents the interests of 24 community choice electricity providers in California: Apple Valley Choice Energy, Baldwin Park Resident Owned Utility District, Central Coast Community Energy, Clean Energy Alliance, Clean Power Alliance, CleanPowerSF, Desert Community Energy, East Bay Community Energy, Lancaster Choice Energy, Marin Clean Energy, Peninsula Clean Energy, Pico Rivera Innovative Municipal Energy, Pioneer Community Energy, Pomona Choice Energy, Rancho Mirage Energy Authority, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, San Diego Community Power, San Jacinto Power, San José Clean Energy, Silicon Valley Clean Energy, Solana Energy Alliance, Sonoma Clean Power, Valley Clean Energy, and Western Community Energy.

² *Assigned Commissioner's Scoping Memo and Ruling*, filed March 15, 2021, at 4-6.

1. What kinds of state- and federal-level funding can support customer debt relief during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What is an equitable way to ensure that both unbundled and bundled customers receive customer debt and arrearage relief?

II. RESPONSE TO PROPOSED QUESTIONS

A. State- and federal-level funding

1. What kinds of state- and federal-level funding can support customer debt relief during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Scoping Memo broadly addresses possible funding structures in Questions 6 and 6a but does not specifically note the use of existing state and federal funding. Parties responded to the Order Instituting Rulemaking (OIR) issued on February 11, 2021, describing their support for the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to utilize federal funding made available such as the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and possibly state-wide funding efforts.³ CalCCA also supports utilizing existing funding to ease customer difficulties in paying their utility debt, as so many Californians are struggling to do right now. An example of a statewide funding opportunity is the California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency's Emergency Rental Assistance Program, a component of the COVID-19 Tenant Relief Act.⁴ Eligible households can apply the state-level assistance for utility arrearages, if funding is available.⁵ In this proceeding, CalCCA suggests that the Commission provide Parties clear direction on the feasibility of utilizing several state- and federal-level funding opportunities. If state- and federal-level funding is available for utility debt, CalCCA suggests that the funding be applied pro-rata for both bundled and unbundled customers. This is

³ Parties such as SoCal Gas, PG&E, TURN, Center for Accessible Technology and National Consumer Law Center commented on their support of using federal funding.

⁴ [State of California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency](#)

⁵ Available for households with incomes at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income, with a priority on helping households at or below 50 percent of Area Median Income as well as households unemployed for the preceding 90 days at the time of application.

to ensure that cost recovery is applied equally, as bundled and unbundled customers both fund policy initiatives through taxation. Hence, CalCCA suggests that the Scoping Memo explicitly describe the potential use of state- and federal-level funding opportunities.

B. Debt relief for unbundled customers

1. What is an equitable way for unbundled and bundled customers to receive customer debt and arrearage relief?

The Commission's stated questions for recognizing the relationship between investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and other electric generation service providers like community choice aggregators (CCAs) is key to having a comprehensive relief plan for all customers. Question 7b is important to CalCCA because it mentions the potential risk of not offering CCA customers arrearage relief. In addition to Question 7b, CalCCA suggests adding the question: What is an equitable way for unbundled and bundled customers to receive customer debt and arrearage relief?

CalCCA has worked extensively with Parties such as the IOUs and TURN in the Arrearage Management Plan (AMP) working group, and comprehensively addressed issues around CCAs' ability to recover costs associated with large-scale public benefit programs in the AMP program. CalCCA requests that a socialized cost-recovery mechanism be similarly applied here to both generation and transportation components of the bill to ensure a larger coverage base. In sum, non-utility electric generation service providers may not utilize delivery rate components such as the Public Purpose Program Charge (PPPC), which is used to recover public program costs from all ratepayers, regardless of their generation provider. This mechanism is applied by spreading costs over a larger ratepayer base, avoiding possible burden or discrimination against any one set of generation customer (IOU or CCA customers). We ask that the Commission and Parties adopt an understanding that regardless of a customer's energy

provider, all ratepayers are impacted by the pandemic and relief is necessary across the board. To ensure that this issue receives the attention it deserves in this proceeding, CalCCA suggests that the question, “What is an equitable way for unbundled and bundled customers to receive customer debt and arrearage relief?” be added to the Scoping Memo.

III. CONCLUSION

For all of the foregoing reasons, CalCCA respectfully requests consideration of the two suggested additions and looks forward to an ongoing dialogue with the Commission and stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,



Evelyn Kahl
General Counsel to the
California Community Choice Association

March 22, 2021