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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
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September 27, 2022

Daniel C. Goldner, Chairman
Public Utilities Commission
21 S. Fruit Street
Concord, NH 03301-2429

Re: DE 22-043 Low Income Electric Assistance Program, 2022-2023 Electric Assistance Program Budgets, *DOE Request for Expedited Order Approving EAP Budgets Effective October 1, 2022*

Dear Chairman Goldner:

For the reasons stated below, the Department of Energy (DOE) requests an **expedited order** approving the Electric Assistance Program (EAP) budgets **effective October 1, 2022**. Without an immediate order, the Community Action Agencies and the utilities will be without administrative budgets at the start of the EAP program year.

By way of background, on September 19, 2022, the DOE notified the Commission that the Electric Assistance Program Advisory Board (Advisory Board) met on August 22, 2022 and voted unanimously to recommend that the Commission approve the 2022-23 EAP program year administrative budgets. The DOE also notified the Commission that it supported the Advisory Board's recommendation. *See* DOE letter and attached Advisory Board Recommendation (filed September 19, 2022). In summary, the total 2022-2023 EAP administrative budget is 5.24% higher than the administrative budget for the 2021-2022 program year. Advisory Board Recommendation at 2 (filed September 19, 2022). The utilities' incremental administrative costs may only include expenses that would be reasonably incurred as part of the utilities administration of the EAP but would not be incurred absent the EAP. The Community Action Agencies' (CAA) administrative costs cover activities such as client outreach and intake, application processing, enrollment of participants and periodic review of ongoing program eligibility. The CAA also conduct compliance monitoring to ensure program guidelines are being adhered to and undertakes outreach and education about the EAP. *See id.* at 1-2.

October 1, 2022 is the beginning of the EAP program year; however, the Commission has not approved the administrative budgets. Given the impending increase in electricity rates for the winter season, the Department respectfully requests that the Commission issue an expedited order approving the budgets in full. In the opinion of the Department, such an order could be issued without hearing and no further process would be necessary. *See* Dkt. No. 20-123, Order No. 26,405 (September 18, 2020) (approving EAP budgets without hearing); Dkt. No. DE 17-122, Order No. 26,059 (September 22, 2017) (same).

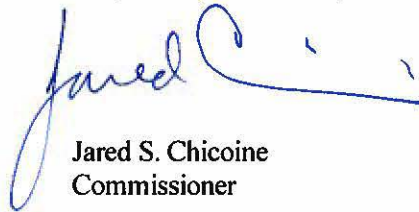
The DOE is mindful of the Commission's concern that the EAP program was projected to have a deficit budget by the end of March 2023. *See* August 11, 2022 Prehearing Conference Transcript at 17, 29 30-1 (Chairman's concern that program design is insufficient); DOE Responses to Record Requests (August 29, 2022) (Response # 5). On September 15, 2022, new legislation made an additional \$7 million dollars available to the EAP program to support the continued payment of benefits. *See* Chapter 346: 4, HB 2023-FN-Final

Version (\$7 million appropriation to EAP). Accordingly, a potential March 2023 deficit need no longer concern the Commission.

The DOE acknowledges that the parties to this docket will soon file both a consultant's report regarding the EAP program and its design, and the Advisory Board's responses to the consultant's report. *See* Dkt. No. 21-133 Procedural Order on [Eversource's] Motion to Extend Filing Deadline and Record Requests (August 11, 2022). Yet, absent an expedited order from the Commission this week, the EAP program will be without funding for administrative expenses in approximately 3 business days.

Consistent with the Commission's current policy, this letter is being filed solely in electronic form. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jared S. Chicoine", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jared S. Chicoine
Commissioner

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