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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Aida Camacho-Welch
Secretary of the Board
44 South Clinton Avenue, 1st Floor
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Re: Docket No. QO21071023 In the Matter of Building Benchmarking Policy Proposal and Implementation Outline – Utility Advantage’s Comments

Utility Advantage, LLC (“Utility Advantage”) appreciates the opportunity to submit these written comments to the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (“NJBP”) on the subject of Building Benchmarking Policy Proposal and Implementation.

Utility Advantage is an energy consulting and services company that has operated in New Jersey since 2003. Utility Advantage provides services to commercial, industrial, institutional and government sector clients as well as residential customers through energy aggregation programs. Utility Advantage is a majority woman-owned business with its main office located in Salem County in South Jersey. Utility Advantage is a NJBP registered Energy Consultant.

We support the need to address building performance in the midst of this clean energy transition. Focusing on the demand side energy and water consumption reduction strategies is an important step to reduce waste as we increase the supply of renewable energy resources to meet the demand for energy in our residences, commercial buildings, industry, and transportation.

We support the use of the EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager tool to provide the data a standardized and transparent measurement of building performance. Not only does the Energy Star Portfolio Manager rating allow buildings to assess their performance over time, but it also allows buildings to be compared to other like facilities within their sector. This external comparison provides the added benefit of identifying how facilities stack up to peers (which can be compelling) and how "competitive" facilities are within an industry sector. The independent oversight by the EPA lends itself to use by government entities in policy-based benchmarking programs.

Regarding the question of the proposed definition of "commercial buildings", we recommend that it be consistent with the definitions used for the NJ Office of Clean Energy and Utility Energy Efficiency Programs. This includes schools (public and private), colleges and universities, and government buildings in their description of qualifying commercial buildings. The benchmarking program will highlight deficient buildings which will be prime targets to benefit from the above mentioned Energy Efficiency Programs.

Regarding Section III. Using Portfolio Manager and Accessing Utility Data, we propose that it be clear that a building owner or its respective building operator, may at its sole discretion utilize the services of a NJBPU registered Energy Consultant to conduct the data collection and reporting into the Energy Star Portfolio Manager system. The building owner, operator or its designated Energy Consultant would grant access to the Portfolio Manager data. The process of collecting accurate data and submitting into the Portfolio Manager system can be complex. Industry third party platforms that integrate secure utility data management systems with the Portfolio Manager platform provide a seamless path to provide monthly and/or annual updates to the building's Portfolio Manager score and facilitate the ability to meet the proposed 3-month reporting timeframe from notice to submission deadline. Automating data access at an aggregated level could remove some of the more granular details that would help to track the usage by equipment. In some cases, there are separate meters for cooking and kitchens, building additions, and other reasons. We suggest that data not be aggregated at the building level and support the use of web services that will allow customers and their designated energy consultant and/or platform to obtain that data via a secure web interface.

We recommend that training and customer support must be available to support customers and their designees to implement this new benchmarking mandate. In addition to the stakeholders mentioned in the proposal, we support working with the energy consulting community and associated trade associations (NJAEE for example) as another important means to get the message to affected property owners.

Regarding Section V. Reporting & Disclosure, we support the requirement to post the Portfolio Manager score in a publicly visible location at the building entry with some color code or letter grade associated with the score. Disclosure of the score must also be made available at transactions as described in the proposal. This supports better performing buildings to receive a premium valuation which is a motivational factor for compliance. We further acknowledge the NJBPU's comment that the Act did not authorize the assessment of fines. We would recommend that the program be designed in a way that would allow local municipalities and counties to determine if they want to authorize fines using the same information provided in the state's

benchmarking program. Other programs in jurisdictions across the USA have shown that after several years of running a benchmarking program for informational purposes, that it is generally followed by the establishment of threshold scores that must be achieved in a set timeframe with penalties for non-compliance.

Once again, Utility Advantage thanks the NJBPU for considering these written comments regarding Building Benchmarking Policy Proposal and Implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'LWJ' or similar initials, positioned above the printed name.

Laurie Wiegand-Jackson
President