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Via email: board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

Sherri Golden
Secretary of the Board
44 South Clinton Avenue
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

RE: In the Matter of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities' Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Universal Service Fund & Fresh Start Programs: Request for Information

Docket No. AO20060471

Dear Secretary Golden:

Elizabethtown Gas Company ("ETG") and South Jersey Gas Company ("SJG") (collectively, "the Companies") respectfully offer the following written responses to the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities' ("Board") Request for Information regarding the Straw Proposal concerning proposed changes to the Universal Service Fund ("USF") and Fresh Start Programs.¹

On March 3, 2023, the Companies noted that the USF and Fresh Start Programs have played a vital role for customers during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods and endorsed (with some qualifiers) maintaining the increased benefits provided to customers in the Board's June 2021 Order.²

The Companies provide the following additional comment:

Questions Under Program Parameters, Fresh Start

The Request for Information provided that "Starting October 1, 2024 USF customers will be able to participate in Fresh Start once in a five (5) year period. Therefore, beginning October 1, 2024 the utility companies will screen USF enrollees upon entry into the USF program to determine if the account has received Fresh Start during the prior five (5) years. If the account: 1)

¹ In the Matter of the Board of Public Utilities' Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, BPU Docket No. AO2006047, Request for Information Dated May 3, 2023.

² In the Matter of the Board of Public Utilities' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, BPU Docket No. AO20060471, Order Dated June 24, 2021.


has not received Fresh Start during the prior five years; and 2) has an overdue balance of \$60 or more, the utility company will automatically enroll the customer into the Fresh Start program.³

The Companies propose amending this paragraph, to substitute the word “customer” for the word “account,” as follows:

Starting October 1, 2024, USF customers will be able to participate in Fresh Start once in a five (5) year period. Therefore, beginning October 1, 2024, the utility companies will screen USF enrollees upon entry into the USF program to determine if the customer has received Fresh Start during the prior five (5) years. If the customer: 1) has not received Fresh Start during the prior five years; and 2) has an overdue balance of \$60 or more, the utility company will automatically enroll the customer into the Fresh Start program.

The Companies appreciate the additional opportunity to offer these comments and look forward to working with the Board on this initiative.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Weitz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jennifer Weitz

³ Request for Information, *supra*.