

June 12, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Sherri L. Golden, RMC
Secretary of the Board
44 South Clinton Ave.
1st Floor P.O. BOX 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350
Email: secretary@bpu.nj.gov

Re: IN THE MATTER OF THE 2024 NEW JERSEY ENERGY MASTER PLAN, Docket No. QO24020126

Dear Secretary Golden:

Oracle Opower appreciates the opportunity to submit comments in response to the Request for Information regarding the 2024 New Jersey Energy Master Plan (“EMP”). Opower is part of Oracle Energy & Water's business practice. We are a utility customer engagement and business intelligence platform, supporting utility decarbonization, affordability, and energy management efforts. We implement behavioral energy efficiency, demand response, and customer engagement programs for 174 utilities across the US and around the world, including programs in New Jersey. Opower appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on opportunities for energy efficiency and beneficial electrification, and on the importance of robust customer outreach and education.

The EMP is an important tool for setting New Jersey’s energy priorities and we appreciate the Board of Public Utilities’ (“BPU”) consideration of the following recommendations and responses to questions posed, organized by strategy number. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at carolyn.sloan@oracle.com.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Sloan
Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs
Oracle Opower

Strategy 3 of the 2019 EMP**What else should New Jersey do to increase education and awareness and address gaps in the accessibility of energy efficiency programs?**

Customer education and awareness plans should be a central component of all energy efficiency programs. Oracle Opower knows, from over 15 years of experience supporting utility energy efficiency and decarbonization programs, that successful customer engagement depends on targeting the right customers at the right time with the right message. We do this by leveraging data science, behavioral science, and thoughtful user design in Home Energy Report programs to personalize proactive customer communications. The EMP should encourage leveraging utility customer data to find and reach customers with energy efficiency and affordability offerings. This is already happening at scale in New Jersey with utility-run behavioral customer engagement programs like Home Energy Reports, as part of a comprehensive effort to provide targeted energy education to New Jersey residents. The more information customers have about their energy use, the more empowered they are to reduce their consumption, shift usage to off-peak times, and engage with energy saving and decarbonizing programs.

One way to increase accessibility and increase awareness and adoption of energy efficiency programs is through an online, consumer-facing one-stop-shop (“OSS”) for all energy efficiency and electrification programs. The OSS should also be inclusive of federal-, state-, local-, and ratepayer-funded programs. It should provide consumers with personalized recommendations – based on known consumer and household attributes, household energy profiles, and information collected directly from the customer through the OSS site.

Strategy 4 of the 2019 EMP**In addition to offering incentives to electrify existing oil- and propane-fueled buildings, as well as buildings heated with older and inefficient electric technologies, what else should New Jersey be doing to successfully achieve its goals of electrifying buildings heated with these technologies?**

As with energy efficiency programs, beneficial electrification programs must incorporate robust customer education and engagement. Building electrification asks customers to take increasingly complex and expensive action, from adopting new technologies, integrating with the grid, changing fuel types, and more. Codes, standards, and incentive programs are critical, but the Energy Master Plan should also acknowledge that customers make many of the decisions about whether and how to electrify their homes, and they need a lot of information in order to do so. Engaging customers with information about their current energy use, how electrification might

impact their usage and bills, and the benefits of adopting electrification technologies is critical to achieving New Jersey's building decarbonization and electrification goals. The EMP should encourage the BPU and utilities to work together, leveraging already existing utility data and programs, to educate customers and help guide them along their electrification journey. This includes ensuring that electrification programs are closely tied to energy efficiency programs to avoid customer confusion. As noted above under Strategy 3, one way to do this is through a One Stop Shop, that allows customers to view energy efficiency, electrification, and other state and federal programs all in one place to reduce friction for customers and streamline program adoption.

Strategy 6 of the 2019 EMP

How can current workforce development programs be further optimized or new programs designed to engage and increase participation from residents in LMI communities? How can the State ensure LMI communities have access to and can afford clean energy and energy efficiency measures, and other “bridge” programs (for example: home remediation or other financing)?

Reaching customers who are energy burdened is especially important, and it can often be difficult to identify which customers are in need and eligible for energy efficiency and income qualified programs. We recommend the Energy Master Plan encourages the BPU to work with utilities in New Jersey to identify energy burdened households and not rely solely on census tract or OBC approaches to direct energy efficiency program resources. A multi-pronged approach to customer identification will result in more equitable access to all energy efficiency programs. Leveraging utility data in this multi-pronged approach will help identify and serve more customers in need.

Building on a data driven approach to identifying low income customers, the Energy Master Plan should also encourage the BPU and utilities to work together in coordinating energy efficiency programs with utility and state assistance programs. Customers who are struggling to pay their bill are less likely to be interested or able to participate in energy efficiency programs. Coordination can ensure that customers who may be energy burdened are identified and reached out to first with information on assistance programs, then automatically directed to energy efficiency programs once they are in a better financial position. As mentioned above, a One Stop Shop can also help prioritize programs for customers, putting assistance programs at the top for customers who need them first before they can engage in energy efficiency programs.