



California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

MEDIA ADVISORY

Docket #: R.18-07-006

**CPUC TO HOLD HEARING ON AFFORDABILITY
OF ESSENTIAL UTILITY SERVICES**

SAN FRANCISCO, February 14, 2022 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will hold a virtual En Banc on Energy Costs and Rates to further evaluate affordability proposals to control costs and mitigate both electric and natural gas rates. The En Banc will allow decision-makers to hear from experts on utility rates and affordability concerns to ensure California can modernize its energy system while maintaining affordable bills for ratepayers.

WHEN: Two days, as follows:

- Monday, February 28, 2022, 9:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 1, 2022, 10 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.

WHERE: Remote access via webcast or phone, as follows:

- Live video broadcast with English or Spanish captions via webcast:
www.adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc
 - Participants who choose to participate via webcast only will have audio and video, but will not be able to make verbal comment. If you would like to make comments during the meeting, refer to the phone-in information below.
 - For English or Spanish captions, after clicking on the name of the workshop, click the green button below the video for captions. Then select captions by clicking on the white icon next to the word “live” at the bottom of the video.
 - The workshop will also be recorded and archived for future viewing.
- Phone (English): 800-857-1917, passcode: 1673482#

- Participants will have audio (in English) and will be able to make comments or ask questions.
- Phone (Spanish): 800-857-1917, passcode: 9431214#
 - Participants will have audio (in Spanish) and will be able to make comments or ask questions.
- Members of the public may submit informal written comments to CostsEnBanc@cpuc.ca.gov.

WHAT: This two-day En Banc examines in more depth affordability proposals addressing ratemaking reforms, equity, environmental concerns, and non-ratepayer funding strategies. This En Banc follows-up on the [rates en banc](#) held in [February 2021](#), which discussed proposals in an [Energy Division whitepaper](#) evaluating utility costs and rate forecasts.

An updated agenda and more information about the En Banc will be available at www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/electrical-energy/affordability.

The CPUC instituted Affordability Proceeding R.18-07-006 in 2018 to develop common understanding, methods, and processes to assess the affordability impacts of individual CPUC proceedings and utility rate requests. Phase 1 of the proceeding defined affordability and essential service, identified metrics and data sources to measure affordability and determine essential service, and determined the usefulness/application of the affordability framework. Phase 2, launched in June 2020, examined issues such as how to implement affordability metrics and methodologies adopted by the CPUC, how to forecast variables used to calculate affordability metrics, and how to set proxy values for essential utility service cost data that are unavailable. This En Banc launches Phase 3 of the proceeding, which will also include a ruling soliciting affordability recommendations from parties, a workshop to discuss solicited proposals, and a staff proposal on recommended strategies to mitigate energy rate increases.

The CPUC has taken many actions addressing affordability concerns, including initiating a proceeding focused on the San Joaquin Valley to establish a methodology for identifying disadvantaged communities in the region. The proceeding also approved \$56 million in funding for 11 pilots that seek to reduce energy costs for households in these communities by way of appliance retrofit pilots, expanded outreach and enrollment in existing demand-side management programs, and new bill protection measures. In addition, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated affordability

challenges, the CPUC has taken numerous measures to help protect consumers, including temporarily halting disconnections for failure to pay utility bills, expanding access to bill subsidy programs, requiring utilities to offer payment plans for customer debt, and authorizing utilities to implement [Percentage of Income Payment Plan \(PIPP\) pilot programs](#), which allow a participant to pay a predetermined affordable percentage of their monthly income toward their utility electricity or natural gas bill. Participants will receive a monthly bill cap for current charges set at four percent of their household's monthly income.

In response to Governor Newsom's directive concerning restrictions on public gatherings to protect customers and community members during COVID-19, the two-day En Banc will not have in-person attendance.

Members of the public can make their voice heard in this proceeding, and read the comments of others, on our online Docket Card comment section at <http://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/c/R1807006>. In addition to the opportunity to comment at the En Banc, party comments will be posted to the Docket Card.

While a quorum of Commissioners and/or their staff may attend the En Banc, no official action will be taken on this matter. If specialized accommodations are needed to attend, such as non-English or sign language interpreters, please contact the CPUC's Public Advisor's Office at public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov or toll-free at 866-849-8390 at least three business days in advance of the event.

To receive electronic updates on CPUC proceedings, sign-up for the CPUC's free subscription service at <http://subscribecpuc.cpuc.ca.gov>.

The CPUC regulates services and utilities, protects consumers, safeguards the environment, and assures Californians' access to safe and reliable utility infrastructure and services. For more information on the CPUC, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov.

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**2022 Affordability Rulemaking En Banc:
Evaluating Innovative Proposals for Cost Containment and Customer Protection**

February 28, 2022, 9:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

March 1, 2022, 10 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

An updated agenda will be available at:

www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/electrical-energy/affordability

DRAFT AGENDA

Monday, February 28, 2022

- 9:30 - 10:15 a.m.** **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**
- 10:15 - 10:30 a.m.** **Staff Overview of Affordability Proposal Evaluation Criteria**
Review of Energy Division's six proposed criteria for evaluating Affordability Proceeding Phase III blue sky proposals.
- 10:30 - noon** **Panel One: Environmental and Social Justice Considerations**
This panel will examine Environmental & Social Justice considerations for areas of affordability concern and assess the meaningful geographic correlation between areas with historically low incomes and higher emissions.
- Noon - 1 p.m.** **Lunch Break**
- 1 - 2:30 p.m.** **Panel Two: Non-Ratepayer Sources of Funding**
This panel will address categories of utility spending (e.g., wildfire mitigation plans, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, public purpose programs) that might be recovered via the General Fund or other sources.
- 2:30 - 4 p.m.** **Panel Three: Electric Ratemaking Reform Proposals and Considerations**
This panel will examine concrete ratemaking proposals and reforms to contain utility cost and rate growth and discuss the long-term outlook for rates and bills in the transition to electrification.
- 4 - 4:30 p.m.** **Public Comment Period**
- 4:30 - 4:45 p.m.** **Closing Remarks**

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

- 10 - 10:10 a.m.** **Opening Remarks**
- 10:10 - noon** **Gas Ratemaking Strategies and Reform Proposals for Ratepayer Protections Amid Electrification Scenarios**
This panel will discuss potential core gas customer rate reforms and the inclusion of gas transition and infrastructure cost recovery in electric rate considerations. The panel will also address the scope of the cost containment

challenges under alternative transportation and building electrification scenarios.

Noon - 1 p.m.

Lunch Break

1 - 2:30 p.m.

Round Table Discussion on Integrated Strategies for Addressing Electric and Gas Sector Affordability Issues

This roundtable discussion with stakeholders and industry principals will highlight critical observations, insights, and perspectives on the gas and electric industry affordability proposals discussed over the course of the two-day En Banc.

2:30 - 3 p.m.

Public Comment Period

3 - 3:15 p.m.

Closing Remarks