

## NOTICE OF COMMENT PERIOD

Issued: May 11, 2021

### In the Matter of Dakota Electric Association's Petition to Implement a Limited Arrearage Forgiveness Program

**PUC Docket Number(s):** E111/M-21-314

**Comment Period:** Initial comment period closes June 10, 2021 at 4:30pm

Reply comment period closes June 15, 2021 at 4:30pm

*Comments received after the close of the comment period may or may not be considered by the Commission.*

**Issue:** Should the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) approve Dakota Electric Association's (DEA) petition for a Limited Arrearage Forgiveness Program?

#### Topic(s) Open for Comment:

- 1) Is the overall design of the Limited Arrearage Forgiveness Program (program) reasonable and prudent, and sufficiently developed in the petition?
- 2) Should the proposed sources of program funding be accepted as reasonable?
- 3) Has DEA proposed an adequate program term, including considerations for energy assistance application cycles?
- 4) Are the proposed eligibility criteria reasonable?
- 5) Does the proposed process for applying a monthly credit to members' balances equitably provide assistance?
- 6) Are the requirements related to energy assistance application appropriate?
- 7) Has DEA proposed adequate customer outreach and communication?
- 8) Should reporting requirements to track program status be established? If so, please offer a reporting timeline and propose information to be reported.
- 9) Are there other issues or concerns related to this matter?

#### Background:

DEA's Petition is among many utility efforts implemented to support ratepayers as they manage utility bills throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This Petition originated in Docket No. 20-375, a docket initiated by the Commission and the Department of Commerce at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in late March of 2020 to extend additional consumer shut off protections during the pandemic period.

On April 1, 2021, in Docket No. 20-375, utilities filed transition plans explaining their shift back to normal service operations. Customer protections remain central to utility service; transition plan provisions protect customers from disconnection and fees when payment plans are established and / or energy assistance is applied for. As a further protection, utilities' transition plans discussed existing arrearage forgiveness programs or contemplated development of such a program. In their transition plan, DEA outlined a new arrearage forgiveness plan<sup>1</sup> with the intention to seek Commission approval once a full Petition was complete. The full Petition was filed April 30, 2021 in Docket No. 20-375. Subsequently, Docket No. 21-314 was opened to discuss this matter separately.

On May 7, 2021, Staff posed a series of questions to DEA regarding their Petition and has filed a *permissible ex parte* communication form in eDockets.

In an effort to help expedite this matter given the unique circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, including unprecedentedly high customer arrearages and the immediate need for additional ratepayer support, the Commission established this condensed reply comment period, and asks that extensions of the initial and reply period not be requested.

**Filing Requirements:** Utilities, telecommunications carriers, official parties, and state agencies are **required** to file documents using the Commission's electronic filing system (eFiling). All parties, participants and interested persons are encouraged to use eFiling: [mn.gov/puc](https://mn.gov/puc), select *eFiling*, and follow the prompts.

**Submit Public Comments:**

**Online:** Visit [mn.gov/puc](https://mn.gov/puc), select Comment and follow the prompts

**Email:** [consumer.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:consumer.puc@state.mn.us)

**U.S. Mail:** Consumer Affairs Office  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
121 7th Place East, Suite 350  
St. Paul MN 55101

**Full Case Record:** See all documents filed in this docket via the Commission's website at [mn.gov/puc](https://mn.gov/puc), select *Search eDockets*, enter the year (21) and the docket number (314), select *Search*.

**Subscribe** to receive email notification when new documents are filed in this docket at [mn.gov/puc](https://mn.gov/puc), select *Subscribe*, or click [HERE](#) and follow the prompts.

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<sup>1</sup> Dakota Electric Association Transition Plan filed April 1, 2021 see PDF pages 7-9. Per Commission request, DEA also filed their Amended Plan on April 30, 2021 which, included information on their arrearage forgiveness program.

**Questions about this docket or Commission process and procedure?** Contact Commission staff, Tera Dornfeld, at [tera.dornfeld@state.mn.us](mailto:tera.dornfeld@state.mn.us) or 651-201-2195. You may also contact Kelly Martone, at [Kelly.martone@state.mn.us](mailto:Kelly.martone@state.mn.us) or 651-201-2245.

**Change your mailing preferences:** Email [docketing.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:docketing.puc@state.mn.us) or call Leesa Norton at 651-201-2246.

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Chrishna Beard, hereby certify that I have this day, served a true and correct copy of the following document to all persons at the addresses indicated below or on the attached list by electronic filing, electronic mail, courier, interoffice mail or by depositing the same enveloped with postage paid in the United States mail at St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
NOTICE OF COMMENT PERIOD**

Docket Number **E111/M-21-314, E, G999/CI-20-375**

Dated this 11th day of May, 2021

/s/ Chrishna Beard

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Kevin	Pranis	kpranis@liunagroc.com	Laborers' District Council of MN and ND	81 E Little Canada Road St. Paul, Minnesota 55117	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-314_M-21-314
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