



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

October 1st 2024

*Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
Comments on Docket 5-UR-111
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854*

RE: Joint Legislative Comments on Rate Case by WEC Energy Group Utilities

Commissioners and Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. As members of the Wisconsin legislature and public servants, it is our job to stand up for the working people of Wisconsin. It is necessary we voice our concerns about the rate increases that are currently being proposed by We Energies.

Right now, people across America are feeling the pinch on their wallet. With prices up, working folks, who are doing everything they can to support their families, simply cannot afford increases in the bills they have to pay to survive. An increase of one or two hundred dollars a year very well could be all the difference in ensuring rent can be paid on time or providing a meal for the family near the end of the month. For this reason we are advocating against the proposed rate hikes that We Energies has brought forward for 2025 and 2026.

We also want to make sure that senior citizens are not left behind in this discussion, as they too often are in other facets of society. Seniors in our area are especially feeling the squeeze, and many of these folks are on fixed incomes. As with working families, this proposed increase could very well be the tipping point for senior citizens on fixed incomes, who do not have the means to deal with the near continual increases they are seeing on their energy bills.

As of this year, customers of We Energies have been subject to 7 increases since 2013. Now, they are hoping to increase rates in each of the next 2 years, which would mean 9 rate hikes over the course of 13 years. These increases are a result in part of We Energies' delay in investing in

renewable energies. While other utilities invested in solar and wind power, We Energies stuck with fossil fuels, only producing a small fraction of their energy using renewables. In 2023, only 9% of all megawatt-hours delivered to customers came from renewable energy sources. This decision has directly harmed both rate payers and the environment. We Energies is claiming one of the factors for the current rate increase is to fund infrastructure for renewable energy sources, a cause which we commend. However, this means a greater cost to rate payers, as infrastructure is more expensive to implement now than it has been in years past.

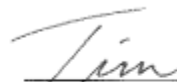
Now, We Energies is playing catch up, and this rate increase proposal is an attempt to put the financial burden of their error on the backs of rate payers. As we speak, We Energies' parent company, WEC Energy Group, is planning on building natural gas infrastructure in Southeastern Wisconsin. Not only would this infrastructure be expensive, in the ballpark of around \$2 Billion, but environmental groups say that this method also leads to dangerous air pollution, releasing the greenhouse gas methane during fracking and transport. Instead of consumers footing the bill for their mishap, We Energies stockholders should be responsible, as should be for a publicly traded company.

It is unreasonable to expect rate payers to continually accept these rate increases they cannot afford. We understand that at the moment, inflation has led to a higher cost of raw materials and labor of every kind. However, because of We Energies' recent history of continual increases, we would like to see greater scrutiny in determining the need for another increase. Right now, the last thing that seniors and working class Wisconsinites need is another heightened expense to worry about. In order to do what is best for the working people of Wisconsin, we respectfully ask that this increase proposal be denied.

Sincerely,



Robert W. Wirth
State Senator
22nd District



Tim Carpenter
State Senator
3rd District