

Hong Wang

From: John Plescow
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 9:22 AM
To: Consumer Correspondence
Subject: FW: Energy Equity in the Wake of Idalia-MOVED TO 20230000 PER J. PLESCOW-DN 05169-2023

Please, add to docket ~~20230001~~ and ~~20230017~~. *20230000-OT* *AT 9/13/23*

From: Chelsea Rivera <chelsea@cfjwj.org>
Sent: Thursday, September 7, 2023 3:01 PM
To: Consumer Contact <Contact@PSC.STATE.FL.US>
Subject: Energy Equity in the Wake of Idalia

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear members of the Public Service Commission,

We, the undersigned community-based organizations around the State of Florida, write to you today on behalf of frontline communities who are directly affected by the climate crisis across the state.

As we recover from Hurricane Idalia and prepare for the inevitable catastrophic storms on the horizon, Floridians should be able to prioritize theirs and their loved ones' safety, and not worry whether they can pay their light bill and if their power will get shut off for nonpayment in the midst of a crisis. **We urge you to prevent Florida's utility companies from disconnecting power for nonpayment and instead demand that they redirect staff efforts to the coordination of power restoration in affected areas.** In consideration of an equitable return to power, we also ask that you urge the utility companies that you oversee to prioritize power to rural, economically-disadvantaged, and low-income areas in a timely manner.

Hurricane Idalia was the most catastrophic storm to hit this region of Florida, an area that is populated primarily by rural communities. At the drafting of this letter on September 7, 2023, there were still over 6,000 households without power in Florida. While the Department of Energy has clear guidelines on how power restoration should be prioritized, the power companies in Florida have a recorded history of operating by their own guidelines, an approach that is inequitable and guided by corporate greed. In the wake of Hurricane Irma and Ian, Hispanic and Latino populations faced longer power outages in the wake of the storm, as did individuals with sensory, physical, and mental disabilities. We urge you to hold utility companies accountable and urge them to respond to these rural power outages in a way that is context-appropriate—that is, we recognize that storm damage and the remoteness of some of these communities might make power restoration take longer than one would expect in a more densely-populated urban area. **Thus, we ask that you demand that the utility companies prioritize supporting local cooperatives in restoring power, supplying rural homes with generators until power can be safely restored, and restoring power to families in an equitable, timely manner.**

Finally, once the acute phase of disaster response has concluded, we ask that you abstain from approving any rate increases related to storm-related fees or fuel recovery costs. Fuel costs have nearly tripled since 2020, and with fuel accounting for nearly 1/3 of Florida electricity bills, your constituents cannot bear any additional financial strain. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the role that non-renewable energy, utility companies, and the PSC play in exacerbating climate disasters, and we will no longer stand to pay for the exploitation of our environment. **We demand that you refrain from approving any fuel recovery and storm-related fees to customer bills in the wake of Idalia.**

Disasters exacerbate the existing inequality and inequity in our societies, especially along race and class lines. Profit-motivated responses create communities that are less able to effectively prepare and recover from future disasters,

effectively creating less resilient communities. In the wake of a disaster, we have the responsibility to not just respond to the immediate needs of our communities but also equip them with the tools and resources to better weather the next storm. In the wake of Idalia, we ask that you focus on equitable recovery rather than exploitation.

Sincerely,
La Mesa Boricua of Florida
Alana Greer, Community Justice Project, Inc.
Jonathan Alingu, Central Florida Jobs with Justice
MacKenzie Marcelin, Florida Rising
Catalyst Miami
Mary Gutierrez, Earth Ethics, Inc.
Jeannie Economos, Farmworker Association of Florida

https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/graphics_at5.shtml?start
<https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10066853>
<https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2023/05/15/florida-teco-electricity-rate-hikes/>
<https://poweroutage.us/>
<https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10066853>