

August 2, 2024

RE: Prioritizing Public Health Through Clean Energy at the Arizona Corporation Commission

Dear [ACC Candidate],

I hope this letter finds you well. As the Executive Director of the Arizona Public Health Association, I am reaching out to emphasize the critical importance of clean energy policies for public health, environmental sustainability, and economic equity as you campaign for the November 2024 election.

The Arizona Corporation Commission plays a pivotal role in regulating utility rates and services, profoundly impacting Arizona's economic and environmental landscape. Recent rate increases from Arizona Public Service and Southwest Gas have had significant repercussions on the social determinants of health, particularly for our most vulnerable populations.

Rising utility costs force difficult choices between essentials like food, housing, and healthcare, exacerbating health disparities among low-income families, seniors, and individuals with chronic health conditions.

The routine approval of these rate hikes undermines the well-being of Arizona residents. The 2022 APS rate increase, and the 2023 SW Gas rate hike have placed substantial burdens on many households. These increases are not just numbers on a bill; they represent real sacrifices and hardships for families across our state.

We urge the ACC to critically evaluate rate increase proposals, ensuring that any approved increases are justifiable and do not disproportionately burden those already struggling.

Evaluating the impact of rate increases through a public health lens is essential. Financial stress and energy insecurity can significantly deteriorate health outcomes. Protecting consumers from unjust rate hikes is crucial for public health.

In addition to fair utility rates, the ACC must steer Arizona towards a sustainable energy future. Arizona, with its abundant sunshine, has tremendous potential for solar energy. Prioritizing investments in renewable energy not only mitigates climate change but also reduces pollution-related health issues, such as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Clean energy initiatives can stimulate economic growth by creating green jobs and reducing energy costs in the long term. By supporting policies that favor renewable energy and energy efficiency, the ACC can ensure a healthier environment and a more resilient economy for all Arizonans.

Expanding rooftop solar programs, enhancing grid storage capabilities, and promoting energy efficiency measures are crucial steps towards a sustainable future. Additionally, the ACC should prioritize reducing emissions from fossil fuels, considering the health implications of energy production.

As you campaign for a position on the ACC, we urge you to commit to these priorities. Fair utility rates and clean energy development align with the broader goal of improving public health and reducing health disparities. Your leadership on these issues can make a significant difference in the lives of Arizona residents.

Thank you for your attention to these critical matters. We look forward to your response and the possibility of working together to create a healthier and more sustainable Arizona.

Sincerely,

Will Humble, MPH

Executive Director, Arizona Public Health Association

Director, Arizona Department of Health Services (2009-2015)