# Public Hearing Testimony – PUCO Case No. 24-1009-EL-AIR

Delivered by: Erin Jeffries

President & CEO, Miami Valley Community Action Partnership

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Good afternoon, Commissioners,

My name is Erin Jeffries, and I am the President and CEO of Miami Valley Community Action Partnership. We are the trusted local agency serving Montgomery, Greene, Preble, and Darke Counties. Through innovative partnerships and efficient use of resources, we assist hard-working individuals and families across our region in achieving greater stability and self-sufficiency. One of the programs we offer is the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIHEAP.

I'm here today to express our strong opposition to AES Ohio’s proposal to increase its electric distribution rates. If approved, this request would raise distribution charges by approximately 14%, costing the average household more than $260 a year. This proposal would place an unnecessary burden on working families and seniors who are already navigating rising costs in every area of life.

We see the real-world impact every day. The residents who turn to us for support are not looking for handouts—they're doing everything they can to keep up. Many are already making tough decisions between paying utility bills, buying groceries, and filling prescriptions. These Ohioans are your constituents—the people who power our local economies, who volunteer in our neighborhoods, who are raising the next generation.

At the same time, public support programs are being scaled back to pre-pandemic levels, making it even harder for families to weather these kinds of utility cost spikes. Our agency has seen record-breaking demand for utility assistance—clear evidence that this rate increase would only deepen existing hardships.

This summer, the demand for energy assistance is especially high. Our agency is currently administering the Summer Crisis Program, a seasonal component of LIHEAP that provides critical electric utility assistance and air conditioning support to eligible households experiencing medical conditions, disconnection, or extreme heat vulnerability. In the first five weeks of the 2025 Summer Crisis Program, we’ve seen a more than 50% increase in application volume compared to the same period in 2024. This dramatic increase illustrates just how essential these programs are for families trying to stay safe and healthy in extreme weather.

Electricity is necessary infrastructure—it powers lifesaving medical equipment, supports children’s education, and keeps families safe in extreme weather. It’s not a luxury, and the ability to afford it should not be out of reach for those who are working hard to move forward.

We ask the Commission to carefully consider the outcomes of this proposed rate increase for the everyday lives of Ohio families and we urge the Commission to reject or significantly reduce this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.