# Testimony Statement

Delivered on behalf of Miami Valley Community Action Partnership (MVCAP)

PUCO Case No. 24-0832-GA-AIR

July 29, 2025

Good evening Commissioners,

My name is Erin Jeffries, and I am the President and CEO of Miami Valley Community Action Partnership—MVCAP—the designated Community Action Agency for Darke, Greene, Preble, and Montgomery counties, all of which are served by CenterPoint Energy.

MVCAP administers the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and offers a wide range of programs and services that help hardworking Ohioans overcome barriers, stabilize their households, and achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

We are here today to oppose CenterPoint’s proposed 25% increase in natural gas distribution rates. At a time when inflation continues to push up the cost of basic necessities—like rent, food, and fuel—this proposed increase would further burden families already struggling to stay afloat.

Even in good times, many of the households we serve struggle to pay their utility bills. A single unaffordable bill—whether electric, gas, or water—can throw an entire household into crisis, forcing impossible choices between heat and groceries, or between medicine and housing.

In 2024, demand for utility assistance in our region reached record highs. Our Summer Crisis Program, which helps with electric bills, served more households and distributed more assistance than ever before—underscoring the broader and growing need for utility affordability, across the board.

Statewide data tells a similar story:
- Ohio has more than 1.29 million households eligible for energy assistance, but only 265,000 were served by LIHEAP last year.
- 36% of Ohio adults were unable to pay their energy bill at least once in the last year.
- Over 90,000 disconnections or reconnections were recorded in one year alone.

Our clients include seniors, young families, people with disabilities, and working Ohioans who are doing their best—but simply cannot absorb a 25% increase in their gas bills.

On behalf of the thousands of residents we serve each year, we urge the Commission to reject or significantly reduce CenterPoint’s proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.