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North Carolina Utilities Commission
430 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, NC 27603

Docket No. E-100, Sub 161, In the Matter of Commission Rules Related to Electric Customer Billing Data, and Docket No. M-100, Sub 164, In the Matter of the Federal Funding Available Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

Dear Chair Mitchell and Commissioners,

I serve as the Director of the State Energy Office ("SEO") in the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. The SEO is tasked with implementing numerous federal funding opportunities, including programs created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law ("BIL"), also called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act ("IRA"). I write to encourage the North Carolina Utilities Commission ("Commission") to require utilities subject to its jurisdiction to provide energy consumption data using the Department of Energy's ("DOE") Green Button Connect My Data protocol.

Previous filings in Docket No. E-100, Sub 161 demonstrate that adoption of the DOE's Green Button Connect My Data protocol greatly simplifies utility customers' access to their own data and the authorized transfer of such data to third parties for analysis. This issue is especially important to the SEO because numerous federal funding opportunities require the SEO to analyze customer energy data to verify energy savings. This requirement becomes a significant and unnecessary barrier when utilities do not utilize the DOE's Green Button Connect My Data protocol.

Section 60103 of the IRA created a \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, which included a \$7 billion program to provide financial and technical assistance to low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy or benefit from zero-emission technologies, including distributed technologies on residential rooftops, and to carry out other greenhouse gas emission reduction activities.¹ Named Solar for All by the Environmental Protection Agency, the SEO and partners applied for up to \$250 million for low-income

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Inflation-Reduction-Act-Guidebook.pdf> at 22.



rooftop and community solar in North Carolina.² This program would be fully funded through federal grants, with no local or state match required. The Solar for All program requires the SEO to demonstrate five meaningful benefits to participating North Carolinians, the first of which is “household savings,” which is defined as delivering a benefit of at least 20% of average household’s electricity bill.³ The SEO’s demonstration of household savings is greatly simplified when utilities utilize the DOE’s Green Button Connect My Data protocol. Insufficient data analysis capabilities risk undermining program efficiency and impact.

Section 50121 of the IRA created the \$4.3 billion Home Energy Performance-Based Whole-House Rebates program and Section 50122 of the IRA created the \$4.5 billion High-Efficiency Electric Home Rebates program.⁴ Collectively, these two programs have allocated \$209,226,120 to the SEO for rebates for North Carolinians to make energy efficiency improvements and purchase high-efficiency appliances.⁵ The IRA also directs the DOE to “develop and publish guidelines for States relating to residential electric and natural gas energy data sharing.”⁶ In doing so, the DOE has encouraged States:

to leverage established data-sharing processes and guidelines and reference the following examples and tools:

- Standards that have been developed through the Green Button Protocols. Green Button *Connect My Data* (CMD) is an open data standard designed to unlock access to utility interval usage and billing data, providing easy, seamless access for software applications. Green Button CMD enables utility customers to authorize third-party solutions to quickly and securely obtain interval meter data and enables an accurate and detailed level of analysis to inform energy and water management decision-making while ensuring customers’ data are protected and their privacy is maintained.⁷

The SEO is currently in the process of applying to the DOE for the home rebates, which requires the SEO to submit a data access plan to the DOE. As with Solar for All, a program of this scale requires efficient data analysis capabilities, and this process is greatly simplified when utilities utilize the DOE’s Green Button Connect My Data protocol.

Section 40551 of the BIL provides \$3.5 billion in supplemental funding to the DOE’s Weatherization Assistance Program (“WAP”).⁸ Of this, \$89,776,045 is allocated to the SEO for weatherization in North Carolina.⁹ Half of these funds are released upon application by

² See, <https://energizenc.com/>.

³ See, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Request for Applications for Solar for All, Funding Opportunity Number EPA-R-HQ-SFA-23-01, Appendix C, available at <https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/348957>.

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Inflation-Reduction-Act-Guidebook.pdf> at 110-111.

⁵ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/IRA%2050121%20%26%2050122%20Home%20Energy%20Rebates%20State%20Allocations.pdf>.

⁶ See, U.S. Department of Energy, Data Access Guidelines for IRA Section 50121: Home Efficiency Rebates, page 1 (July 2023), available at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/IRA-50121-Home-Efficiency-Rebates-Data-Access-Guidelines-1.0.pdf>.

⁷ *Id.* at 4.

⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/BUILDING-A-BETTER-AMERICA-V2.pdf> at 161.

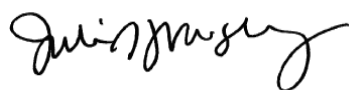
⁹ https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/wpn-bil-2_022124.pdf at 3.



the SEO and the second half are released upon the demonstration of various performance requirements.¹⁰ One of the metrics used in measuring performance is energy savings.¹¹ The SEO's calculation of energy savings is simplified and more precise if the SEO has access to actual energy consumption data from North Carolinians who participate in the WAP program.

The SEO remains committed to capturing federal funding for the benefit of North Carolinians. The SEO will be forced to find work-around solutions if the utilities do not provide data in industry-standard formats. The Commission's decision in Docket No. E-100, Sub 161 can greatly ease the SEO's work or can create unnecessary execution risk to up to \$500 million in federal funding for North Carolina. As such, we encourage the Commission to require utilities subject to its jurisdiction to provide data to customers using the DOE's Green Button Connect My Data protocol.

Sincerely,



Julie S. Woosley
Director, State Energy Office

¹⁰ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-03/wpn-bil-22-1.pdf> at 6-7.

¹¹ https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/DOE_F_540_2-V1.0.pdf at Item II.5.

