# BEFORE THE STATE CORPORATION COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF KANSAS

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# REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF

# KIMBERLY H. WINSLOW

ON BEHALF OF EVERGY KANSAS CENTRAL, INC. AND EVERGY KANSAS SOUTH, INC.

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF EVERGY KANSAS CENTRAL, INC. AND EVERGY KANSAS SOUTH, INC. FOR APPROVAL TO MAKE CERTAIN CHANGES IN THEIR CHARGES FOR ELECTRIC SERVICE PURSUANT TO K.S.A: 66-117.

Docket No. 25-EKCE-294-RTS

**JULY 3, 2025** 

- 1 Q. Please state your name and business address.
- 2 A: My name is Kimberly H. Winslow. My business address is 1200 Main Street, Kansas City,
- 3 Missouri 64105.
- 4 Q. Are you the same Kimberly H. Winslow who prefiled direct testimony in this docket
- 5 on January 31, 2025?
- 6 A: Yes, I am.
- 7 Q. What is the purpose of your rebuttal testimony?
- 8 A: My rebuttal testimony will address Staff and CURB's testimonies on the Stay Connected
- 9 Pilot ("SCP") Program. Specifically, I will address Staff's objection to the permissibility
- of the SCP Program and then I will address CURB's suggested modifications to the
- program design. First, however, I will address corrections to the proposed tariff for the SCP
- Program.
- 13 Q. What tariff corrections do you offer?
- 14 A: I request the Commission accept these two tariff corrections:
- EKC inadvertently referenced Missouri rather than Kansas in its proposed tariff. The
- 16 Company will be using Kansas Department of Children and Families ("DCF") criteria,
- 17 not Missouri criteria, as a guide to qualify EKC participants.
- The proposed tariff should reference that the budget being requested is \$1.6 million
- rather than \$2.0 million.<sup>2</sup> My direct testimony is consistent with the request for \$1.6
- 20 million.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Evergy Kansas Central tariff, General Terms and Conditions, 14.01 Evergy Stay Connected Pilot Program, Section 14, Sheet 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Evergy Kansas Central tariff, General Terms and Conditions, 14.01 Evergy Stay Connected Pilot Program, Section 14, Sheet 1.

- These corrections are reflected in the revised SCP Program tariff attached to my rebuttal testimony as **Exhibit KHW-1**.
- 3 Q: Please summarize the SCP Program that EKC requests in this case.
- A: The SCP Program is a three-year pilot designed to keep income-eligible EKC residents current on their account by relieving some of their financial burden. By offering monthly bill credits, the program helps customers avoid getting into a crisis situation by offering more manageable monthly bills. Below is a summary of the SCP Program as proposed by EKC in my direct testimony:
  - Eligible residential customers must be current on their account or be enrolled in a payment plan.
    - Customer's income must be within 250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines ("FPL").
    - EKC estimates up to 2,500 customers could be enrolled at any given time.
- EKC will partner with Promise Pay, and The Salvation Army to cross promote other
   programs, including the Low-income Assistance Energy Program ("LIEAP").
  - Maximum amount of the credit allowed will be up to \$100 per month.
- EKC proposes program costs be funded 100% by rate revenues and socialized among all residential customers.

# 18 Q: Is Staff supportive of the SCP Program?

19 A: No. Staff states the SCP Program is a 'lifeline' rate and is unreasonably discriminatory and
20 unduly preferential because it gives a 'special rate' to some customers due to income but
21 is not available to all customers.<sup>3</sup> EKC does not view this program as unjustly
22 discriminatory or unduly preferential. And it is not a 'lifeline' rate, but rather a credit.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A. Jackson Direct, Pages 31-34.

Customers who are low-income are reasonably distinct among other customer classes or circumstances. Additionally, the benefits of the program, which are not just for low-income but for all customers, provide a reasonable basis for approval by the Commission as allowed under the applicable law as I understand it from a lay person's perspective.

Mr. Ives provides a more detailed response in his rebuttal to Staff's position regarding the legality of the SCP Program under Kansas law.

# Q: How does the SCP Program compare to other similar national programs?

It is very similar. Nationally, as of 2024, more than 30 states have approved or implemented utility low-income rates or discount programs where income-qualified households receive a discount or bill credits funded by other customers. These programs typically use income thresholds at 200–300% of the FPL, similar to the proposed EKC program. The SCP Program helps low-income customers maintain service continuity and avoid arrearages.

# Q: Please explain why Staff recommends removal of the SCP Program costs from EKC's cost of service.

15 A: Staff classifies the SCP Program as a 'lifeline' rate and relies upon certain decisions by

Kansas courts and the Commission to conclude the SCP Program is impermissible under

Kansas law.

# 18 Q: Why does EKC disagree with Staff's position?

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A. We disagree because Staff's view is overly strict and narrow, unnecessarily limiting the
Commission's rate setting authority. It overplays the *Jones* decision<sup>4</sup> while ignoring the
language in decisions of other courts and in KCC orders that would allow for approval of
the SCP Program. The courts have repeatedly stated that the Commission has very broad

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Jones v. Kansas Gas & Electric, 222 Kan. 390 (1977).

discretion in establishing a rate design<sup>5</sup>, and what is required is that there be a reasonable basis for the rates adopted.<sup>6</sup> While the legal analysis on this will be in the parties' post-hearing briefs, my lay person's review causes me to conclude that Kansas law allows for reasonable classifications among customer types if they are not arbitrary. Courts and commissions have upheld distinctions where the classification is based on real differences and the underlying policy for the decision supports the public interest.

# Q. Why do you say Staff overplays the *Jones* decision?

Again, I am not an attorney. But as a lay person, I think Staff reads the *Jones* decision too broadly. That case dealt with a very specific late payment fee situation – not a rate design for utility service. Furthermore, the concept that "one class of consumers shall not be burdened with the costs created by another class" is not the end-all in the inquiry. A class cost of service study ("CCOS") is a starting point in rate design, and the courts and KCC frequently approve or adopt rates that reflect other important considerations – such as keeping customers on the network so they can contribute to fixed cost recovery and reducing disconnection and collection expenses that are paid by all customers.

For these reasons, EKC disagrees with Staff's recommendation and believes the KCC has flexibility to approve the SCP Program as being in the public interest. The Commission has broad discretion to determine what is in the public interest, especially

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Midwest Gas Users Ass'n v. Kansas Corp. Com'n, 5 Kan.App.2d 653, 751 (1981) ("Midwest II") – Rate design involves a policy decision which is legislative in nature and the KCC's orders in that regard demand utmost deference from the judicial branch.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Midwest II - A rate structure imposing differing rates on different classes will be upheld if there is a reasonable basis to support it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Midwest Gas Users Association v. State Corp. Com'n, 3 Kan.App.2d 376, 391 (1979) "Midwest I") - The court said, "We think Midwest reads too much into an unexceptionable but abstract statement of law. In *Jones* the court dealt with two commodities, credit and collection expense, which were quite distinct from the utilities' basic service, which was the sale of electricity."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> *Id*.

- when it comes to affordability and service continuity. Assisting low-income households with maintaining electric service promotes health, safety, and economic stability, consistent with the goals of Kansas and past regulatory decisions.
- 4 Q. What are CURB's concerns with the SCP Program?
- 5 A: CURB outlines five concerns and/or recommendations:

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- CURB expects SCP Program enrollment to exceed EKC's projections.
- CURB proposes a modified definition of Qualified Customer and recommends
   changing the SCP Program eligibility from 250% to 200% FPL.
  - CURB recommends Average Payment Plan as a requirement for participation in the SCP Program.
  - CURB recommends shareholders fund the administrative costs of the SCP Program.
  - CURB recommends that EKC adjust its revenue requirement that reflects the benefits of the SCP Program.
    - CURB recommends that excess program funds remaining at the end of the SCP
       Program term be carried forward for the next iteration, if the program is renewed or continues in a modified manner.
- 17 I address each of these in my rebuttal testimony below.
- 18 Q. How do you respond to CURB's concern that SCP Program enrollment will exceed19 EKC's projections?
- 20 A: I do not dispute that there is a great deal of uncertainty right now with respect to federal
  21 LIHEAP<sup>9</sup> funding, and any reductions or elimination of LIHEAP funding will only

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> LIHEAP stands for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. It is a federally funded program that helps low-income households with their energy bills. The term LIEAP (Low-Income Energy Assistance Program) is often used interchangeably and is the name used to refer to the state of Kansas' implementation of the federal LIHEAP.

increase pressure on this segment of customers and increase the need for programs like the SCP Program. EKC has been in discussions with policy makers, elected officials and the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition ("NEUAC") and is tracking the current federal administration's efforts to transition those federal LIHEAP administrative duties to other federal staff. However, while LIHEAP is threatened to be reduced, the administration did release to the states the supplemental 10% of funds from FY 2025.

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EKC designed the SCP Program as a pilot so that we can learn more about its value to participating and non-participating customers. Approval of this pilot is a first step, and EKC is committed to evaluating the key performance indicators as outlined in my direct testimony so that a determination can be made regarding the "right" budget level if or when the Company requests a permanent program. EKC also offers that the SCP Program will experience a ramp period in enrollments as it will take time to create awareness for the program, collaborate with identified partners, enroll customers and implement the application process. If SCP Program availability fills quickly, changes in outreach will be slowed to match the program demand. Additionally, EKC will continue its targeted and customized outreach to income-eligible customers to make them aware of the Kansas LIEAP, other resources and provide application assistance. This targeted approach will help customers navigate resources and allow EKC Customer Affairs team to manage the SCP Program applications. For the pilot program, EKC will track all enrollments as is done with our similar Missouri Economic Relief Program ("ERPP") and will discontinue taking enrollments if the applications exceed openings and funding.

Q. How do you respond to CURB's concern over EKC's definition of "Qualified Customer"?

1	A:	EKC accepts CURB's recommendation to modify the definition of a Qualified Customer
2		to "A customer who satisfies the eligibility requirements of the Stay Connected Pilot
3		Program."
4	Q.	How do you respond to CURB's recommendation to change the SCP Program
5		eligibility from 250% to 200% FPL?
6	A:	CURB believes EKC's proposed 250% FPL eligibility criteria to be too expansive and
7		prefers that the program focus on the most vulnerable customer. While EKC designed the
8		SCP Program to be flexible in its support for the state's working poor as well as those with
9		very low income, given the ongoing uncertainty with LIHEAP, EKC acknowledges
10		CURB's concern and supports CURB's recommendation to modify the eligibility criteria
11		to 200% FPL.
12	Q.	How do you respond to CURB's recommendation for calculating the SCP bill credit
13		amount?
14	A:	CURB is concerned that EKC's proposal to use an average of a customer's 12-month usage
15		to set the SCP bill credit will be too low in summer months and too high in winter months.
16		However, Evergy has operated its Missouri ERPP that has a similar credit mechanism for
17		15 years without experiencing the issues CURB identifies.
18	Q.	CURB recommends that participants be required to enroll in the Average Payment
19		Plan. Do you agree?
20	A:	No, I do not believe that it is appropriate to require customers to be on Average Payment
21		Plan as an eligibility requirement. CURB is concerned that participants' energy bills may

- be zero in any given month, thereby creating a sense of a free social welfare program. 10
- 2 Evergy has not had issues with its Missouri ERPP, and EKC disagrees with this statement.
- 3 Q. CURB further proposes bill credits be limited to the lesser of 40% of the monthly bill
- 4 or under \$100. Do you agree?
- 5 A: No. This adjustment is unnecessary and would require a fluctuating bill credit amount. The
- 6 pilot program needs to be simple and straightforward, and this additional requirement
- 7 would be confusing to a participant to understand percents and what to expect month over
- 8 month.
- 9 Q. CURB proposes that program administrative costs be borne by shareholders rather
- 10 than included in the program budget. How do you respond?
- 11 A: EKC estimates annual administrative costs of \$175,000, which is included in the \$1.6
- million pilot budget. EKC's request to recover these administrative costs within EKC's
- revenue requirements is reasonable and consistent with regulatory policy which says a
- regulated utility should be allowed to recover in its rates the reasonable costs of providing
- service to its customers. The costs of administering EKC's customer programs are
- unavoidable and reasonable costs of service. There is no basis for disallowing these costs
- 17 for the SCP Program. Mr. Ives addresses this, as well, in his rebuttal testimony.
- 18 O. What are these administrative costs?
- 19 A. These are costs incurred by EKC for income verification, application processing, and
- 20 targeted communications to promote the ESC program, increase awareness and
- engagement in the KS LIEAP, provide application assistance and program evaluation. I
- 22 note EKC is not requesting additional budget for internal program management and is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Franz Direct Testimony, Page 12, Lines 11-16

- committed to absorbing the costs of the incremental program effort among its existing employees during the pilot period.
- Q. If Evergy's shareholders do not bear the SCP administrative costs, do you agree with CURB's statement that "[a]s proposed it is residential ratepayers who would be fully committed to the SCP"<sup>11</sup>?
- 6 A: CURB's statement implies that Evergy will only be committed to the SCP Program if 7 shareholders bear the cost of the SCP Program administrative costs. I wholly disagree with 8 CURB's implication. As the Commission can see from the success of our Missouri ERPP, 9 we are committed to ensuring that the SCP Program is a success, that the key performance 10 indicators are met or exceeded (if applicable), and that all customers (participating and 11 non-participating) benefit from this program. EKC's request for recovery of administrative 12 costs of this program through revenue requirements rather than through its shareholders in 13 no way diminishes the Company's commitment to its communities. EKC is proud to offer this program as an option for its regulators to approve, providing an additional opportunity 14 15 for customers who are experiencing hardship to have greater security with respect to their 16 electric bill, and reaping the overall benefits of the program for all our customers. EKC 17 will be fully committed to assisting eligible customers and making the program a success.
  - Q. CURB also recommends that excess program funds remaining at the end of the SCP Program term should be carried forward for the next iteration if the SCP Program is renewed or continues in a modified manner. Is that acceptable to EKC?
- Yes. EKC agrees any remaining funds at the end of the SCP Program be carried forward
   for the next iteration of the program until all funds are used by eligible customers.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Franz Direct Testimony, Page 14.

1	Q.	Lastly, CURB recommends that EKC adjust its revenue requirement in this case to
2		reflect the expected benefits of the SCP Program. How do you respond?
3	A:	Company witness Darrin Ives will address this recommendation by CURB in his rebuttal
4		testimony.
5	Q.	Please summarize your recommendations.
6	A:	I recommend the following:
7		• The Commission accepts the above corrections to the SCP Program proposed tariff.
8		• The Commission find the SCP Program offers benefits system-wide in addition to
9		the direct benefits for low-income customers and reject Staff's notion that the
10		Commission's authority is so limited as to prevent it from approving the SCP
11		Program on the basis that it is unreasonably discriminatory and unduly preferential.
12		• The Commission approve the SCP Program as proposed by EKC with the following
13		modifications recommended by CURB:
14		o Revised definition of "Qualified Customer"
15		<ul> <li>Change the SCP Program eligibility from 250% to 200% FPL</li> </ul>
16		o Remaining funds at the end of the SCP Program be carried forward for the
17		next iteration of the program until all funds are used by eligible customers
8		• The Commission reject CURB's recommendations (1) to require a participant
19		enroll in the average payment plan, (2) that bill credits be limited to the lesser of
20		40% of the monthly bill or under \$100, and (3) that Evergy's shareholders be
21		required to pay the annual administrative costs of the SCP Program.
22	Q.	Does this conclude your Rebuttal testimony?
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Darrin Ives, Vice President

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	e under this rate schedule shall be available to participale funds and who satisfy the following eligibility requirem  Participant must be a customer receiving residential so  Participant's annual household income must be verifing greater than 250 percent (250%) of the federal poverty	ents: ervice under the C fied initially, and a	ompany's Sch	nedule R.	
3)	Participants who have outstanding arrearages will enter into special pay arrangements as mutually agreed to by both the Participant and the Company.				
4)	Participants must provide, via an interview or questionnaire, information related to their energy use and program participation. Any information provided in these interviews or questionnaires that is later made public will not be associated with the participant's name.				
5)	Any provision of the Company's rules and regulat customers will also apply to ESCP participants.	ions applicable to	o the Compa	ny's Schedule R	
6)	Participants will not be subject to late payment penalti	es while participat	ing in the prog	ram.	
Energy	/ Assistance				
1)	Participants who have not previously completed a Assistance Program) agree to apply for LIEAP when				

- through the Agencies, shall assist ESCP participants with completion of the LIEAP application when such assistance is requested.
- 2) Applicants agree to apply for any other available energy savings and assistance programs identified by the Company.

<u>Credit Amount</u>
Participants shall receive the available ESCP credit for so long as the participant continues to meet the ESCP eligibility requirements and reapplies to the program as required.

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shall modify the tariff as shown hereon.

Sheet 3 of 4 Sheets

## **GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Participants shall receive the ESCP credit in the amount of each participant's average bill for the most recent 12 months bills, not to exceed \$100 per month. The credit amount will be determined by the Company at the time of enrollment.

# **Discontinuance and Reinstatement**

The Company will discontinue a participant's ESCP credit for any of the following reasons:

- If the Company, through the Agencies, determines the participant no longer meets the eligibility requirements set forth in this tariff.
- If the participant submits a written request to the Company asking that the ESCP credit be discontinued.
- If the participant does not conform to the Company's rules and regulations as approved by the Kansas Corporate Commission, and as a result the participant has Schedule R service discontinued.

Reinstatement of the ESCP credit following discontinuance in the above circumstances and after the participant again meets the eligibility requirements will be at the discretion of the Company.

# **Misapplication of the ESCP Credit**

Providing incorrect or misleading information to obtain the ESCP credit shall constitute a misapplication of the ESCP credit. If this occurs the Company may discontinue the ESCP credit and rebill the account for the amount of all ESCP credits received by the participant. Failure to reimburse the Company for the misapplication of the ESCP credits may result in termination of customer's electric service pursuant to the Company's rules and regulations. However, nothing in this experimental tariff shall be interpreted as limiting the Company's rights under any provision of any applicable law or tariff.

# **Other Conditions**

The ESCP program has been designed so that the Company neither profits from nor incurs losses as a result of offering this experimental program.

Costs of administering the program, including those costs charged by the Agencies, shall be paid from the program funds.

The Company will gather and maintain participant data on usage, arrears, payments and other relevant factors to be used in the evaluation of the program.

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By\_

Darrin Ives, Vice President

STATE OF KANSAS )
(COUNTY OF SHAWNEE )

# VERIFICATION

Kimberly Winslow, being duly sworn upon her oath deposes and states that she is the Sr Director Energy Solutions, for Evergy, Inc., that she has read and is familiar with the foregoing Testimony, and attests that the statements contained therein are true and correct to the best of her knowledge, information and belief.

Kimberly Winskow

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of July 2025.

Notary Public

My Appointment Expires May 30 2020

LESLIE R. WINES

MY APPT. EXPIRES 6100/2021

### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I do hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing document has been emailed, this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of July 2025, to all parties of record as listed below:

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