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Exhibit No. 1

Nancy Hurt – Exhibit 1
OPC-Who We Are
File No. EC-2024-0108

Who We Are

For millions of Missouri homes and businesses, investor-owned utility companies operating as state-sanctioned monopolies are the sole provider of essential electric, natural gas, water, wastewater, and/or steam heat services. The Missouri Office of the Public Counsel (OPC) was established in 1975 to represent and protect the interests of the public receiving such services.

The OPC is not itself responsible for determining what public utility companies may charge their customers for utility services, or determining any other aspect of utility service. Those decisions are made by the **Missouri Public Service Commission (<https://psc.mo.gov/>)** (PSC), a separate state agency.

Instead, the OPC possess the authority and duty to appear before the PSC and “*represent and protect the interests of the public in any proceeding before or appeal from*” the PSC. (Mo. Rev. Stat. § **386.710** (<https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=386.710>)). The OPC employs a small team of attorneys and technical experts, who make recommendations and arguments to the PSC on behalf of Missouri’s citizens and businesses. Most cases before the PSC involve issues that are not contested or are resolved through settlement. However, where contested issues do not settle, the OPC litigates cases with expert evidence and argument on behalf of the public. By doing so, the OPC is able to give a voice to “captive” utility customers who have little choice but to continue receiving a utility’s services regardless of the rates charged or quality of service provided.

If at the conclusion of a case the OPC believes the PSC’s resolution of an issue would result in an outcome that is unreasonable and/or unlawful, the OPC may appeal the PSC’s decision to Missouri’s Court of Appeals.

Since the OPC represents the public generally, the OPC does not provide specific legal representation of individuals with complaints before the PSC. However, the OPC tries to help customers with complaints or concerns by contacting the utility or directing them to the appropriate PSC department or government agency.

While the OPC’s foremost responsibility is to act as the public’s utility customer advocate, Missouri statutes also place the Missouri Office of the Property Rights Ombudsman within the OPC. (Mo. Rev. Stat. § **523.277** (<https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=523.277>)). The Property Rights Ombudsman provides guidance to Missouri property owners facing eminent domain issues (though it does not supply any formal legal representation).

The staff of the OPC is dedicated to protecting the interests of the public through its advocacy before the PSC and Missouri Courts, and we are interested in hearing from you any time you have a question, comment, or concern regarding your utility services. Please visit our **Contact ([contact-us.html](#))** page for our contact information.