

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COMMISSIONER MARTHA GUZMAN ACEVES, ASSISTANT CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE ANTHONY COLBERT and
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE CAMILLE WATTS-ZAGHA,
co-presiding

Order Instituting Rulemaking to
Address Energy Utility Customer Bill
Debt Accumulated During the COVID-19
Pandemic.

) EVIDENTIARY
) HEARING
)
)
)
) Rulemaking
) 21-02-014
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)

REPORTERS' TRANSCRIPT
Virtual Proceeding
May 27, 2021
Pages 1 - 166
Volume 1

Reported by: Doris Huaman, CSR No. 10538
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1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

I N D E X

WITNESSES:	PAGE
DAN MARSH	
CHARITY SPIRES	
SEAN MATLOCK	
MICHELLE ANSANI	10
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	
Examination By Assistant Chief Colbert	14
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	14
Examination By Commissioner Guzman Aceves	24
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	27
Examination By Assistant Chief Colbert	29
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	30
Examination By Commissioner Guzman Aceves	36
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	39
Examination By Ms. Kasnitz	49
Examination By Mx. Stano	51
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	52
Examination By Ms. Cho	55
Examination By Ms. Merza	56
IVONNE MEZA	
NEIL SINGH	
EUGENE AYUYAO	
STEVE RAHON	64
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	
Examination By Commissioner Guzman Aceves	89
IVONNE MEZA, NEIL SINGH, EUGENE AYUYAO, STEVE RAHON (RESUMED STAND)	
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha (Resumed)	91
Examination By Assistant Chief Colbert	113
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	115
Examination By Mr. Katz	133
Examination By Ms. Cho	136
Examination By Mx. Stano	141
Examination By Ms. Kasnitz	144
Examination By ALJ Watts-Zagha	148
Examination By Ms. Kasnitz	149
Examination By Ms. Merza	150

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

STATEMENTS

MR. GOMEZ	152
MS. REYES LAGUNERO	154
MS. FULTON	156
MS. LEE	158

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

VIRTUAL PROCEEDING

MAY 27, 2021 - 10:02 A.M.

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ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE WATTS-ZAGHA:

We will be on the record.

This is Rulemaking 21-02-014, the Commission's proceeding addressing energy utility customer bill debt.

We met yesterday, on May 26th, at a status conference where we met. We tested out our sound and video. We established today's participants, and we will introduce them during today's hearing at the appropriate time. And since yesterday's status conference, we also posted to the Commission's web page for this proceeding some updated reports from each utility as to their numbers of customers who've applied for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

We've heard from many of the utilities that they have updates, so we'll be happy to receive these today. And I did want to let you know that you should probably pull up the web page and refer to the utility reports if you'd like to follow along during today's proceeding. I believe that is our one document that we'll be using primarily.

And I see we have with us

1 Commissioner Guzman Aceves. So I would like
2 to ask if she would like to make some
3 welcoming remarks.

4 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Thank you,
5 Judge Watts-Zagha.

6 I'm very happy to be here today, and
7 I want to thank everyone for being here as
8 well. I also am very excited about the
9 prospect of the state legislature
10 appropriating at least a billion dollars of
11 what the governor has proposed in his May
12 revision for dealing with the issue of
13 customer arrears. And this is an
14 opportunity, of course, for us to really
15 ensure that our collaboration with our sister
16 agency, Housing Community Development, is as
17 sharp as possible and in preparation
18 hopefully for what can be an even greater
19 opportunity for our customers and ensure that
20 if that appropriation takes place we are
21 ready to go with it.

22 And as you know, the appropriation
23 is proposed by the governor to be
24 administered by CSD, Community Services &
25 Development Department, not HCD. So there
26 will be an adjustment there for sure. But
27 mostly want to make sure we are doing all
28 that we can with the current appropriation.

1 I just want to share the importance of us
2 being prepared for the hopeful appropriation
3 of a billion dollars coming to us hopefully
4 with the June budget. So thank you for that.
5 And I very much look forward to hearing all
6 the updates from the utilities and all the
7 other parties on how we can improve this
8 relief for our customers.

9 Thank you very much.

10 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you,
11 Commissioner Guzman Aceves.

12 And as you know, we are today
13 focused on the Emergency Rental Assistance
14 Program that California launched a few months
15 ago to help Californians who are behind in
16 paying their rent and also behind in paying
17 utility arrearages of all sorts including
18 energy arrearages. And since this is a new
19 program and a recent program, we also
20 directed utilities to update us weekly on how
21 many customers are able to access this
22 relief, and as you all know, you've been
23 engaged in this process for a month or two.
24 And it's somewhat difficult to tell from the
25 numbers what type of relief has been received
26 so far from this program. And so that's why
27 it seemed appropriate here today to ask you
28 to each come with a witness primarily to find

1 out from the people who are engaged in making
2 this process happen and receiving this relief
3 on behalf of your customers how the process
4 is going.

5 And as the Commissioner indicated,
6 this is just one of ideally additional state
7 relief that will be forthcoming. So it's
8 really important to understand from your
9 perspective how this has gone so far. So I
10 thank everyone for being here. I thank you
11 for working with us to provide these weekly
12 updates. And through this process today,
13 we'll be able to better understand how it's
14 been going from your perspective. And it's
15 been clear from all the comments in this
16 proceeding that everyone is focused on this
17 common goal of reducing customers billed in
18 all the different ways that are possible.

19 So as I mentioned yesterday, we're
20 going to start with the small and
21 multi-jurisdictional utilities. We've asked
22 four of them to participate, and then we'll
23 turn to the large investor-owned utilities.
24 So I'll have -- I'll actually introduce you,
25 your counsel, and then why don't we have the
26 counsel introduce the witnesses.

27 So we have Mr. Gibson representing
28 three of the small electric utilities. And

1 if you could please introduce your witnesses
2 for the record, and we'll swear them in as a
3 panel between the three electric utilities
4 and then the fourth small gas utility.

5 So go ahead, Mr. Gibson, please.

6 MR. GIBSON: Good morning, your Honor.
7 Jed Gibson on behalf of Bear Valley Electric
8 Service, Liberty Utilities and PacifiCorp.

9 The witness for Bear Valley is Sean
10 Matlock. The witness for Liberty is Dan
11 Marsh, and the witness for PacifiCorp is
12 Charity Spires.

13 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you. And now
14 the counsel for Southwest Gas, Catherine
15 Mazzeo.

16 MS. MAZZEO: Thank you. Good morning,
17 you Honor. Cathy Mazzeo on behalf of
18 Southwest Gas. Our witness today is Michelle
19 Ansani, and she's here with me in the room.

20 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Okay. So I will
21 ask -- I will swear you in, and then I will
22 ask each witness in turn to respond, please.

23 DAN MARSH, called as a witness by
24 Liberty Utilities, having been sworn,
testified as follows:

25 CHARITY SPIRES, called as a witness
26 by PacifiCorp, having been sworn,
testified as follows:

27 SEAN MATLOCK, called as a witness by
28 Bear Valley Electric Service, having
been sworn, testified as follows:

1 MICHELLE ANSANI, called as a witness
2 by Southwest Gas, having been sworn,
3 testified as follows:

4 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Mr. Marsh?

5 WITNESS MARSH: I do.

6 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Ms. Spires?

7 WITNESS SPIRES: I do.

8 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Mr. Matlock?

9 WITNESS MATLOCK: I do.

10 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: And Ms. Ansani?

11 WITNESS ANSANI: I do.

12 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you. So I
13 heard first yesterday from Bear Valley that
14 you had updates to the number of customers
15 that you've been in contact with about
16 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. So I'd
17 like to actually ask everyone to pull up our
18 tracking document that we have posted on the
19 website, and then I'll ask Mr. Matlock to
20 walk us through the rows in that tracking
21 document and provide any updates as a
22 beginning, and then we can have some
23 back-and-forth with you, Mr. Matlock.

24 So just give me a moment while I
25 pull up the document myself, and hopefully
26 others are able to do that independently.

27 (Interruption by reporter.)

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you, Doris, and
I would actually suggest, since we have four

1 witnesses, that if Southwest Gas -- you could
2 be the last witness and take some time to
3 readjust while we're hearing from the
4 electric small utilities. That would be
5 quite helpful.

6 MS. MAZZEO: Sure. Sure thing. Thank
7 you.

8 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: All right. And I do
9 hear a rather -- sort of an echo in your
10 sound, Ms. Mazzeo. All right.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

13 Q Let's turn back to Mr. Matlock, and
14 if you could walk us through -- I will -- I
15 will actually just ask you to begin by
16 responding with how is it going with securing
17 emergency rental assistance funding for your
18 customers, and then perhaps you could give us
19 the update on the particular numbers of
20 customers that you've been in touch with
21 about it.

22 And I will actually remind everyone
23 that when we issued a ruling back in April we
24 asked each utility not to report on any and
25 all customers that are receiving the funding
26 but simply to find customers that have high
27 arrearages and target a small group of these
28 and simply to report to us the progress of

1 the small group. And what happened is
2 since -- it seems that the progress of the
3 small group, there was zeros, that customers
4 had not yet been validated or had been --
5 their accounts had not been paid, then we
6 just turned -- opened it up to any and all
7 customers that you receive payments for. So
8 it would be ideal if you could talk about the
9 group you've targeted, but then you may also
10 just turn to any and all customers who
11 receive payments from this program.

12 So I'll turn back to you,
13 Mr. Matlock, and first tell us what has your
14 experience been so far with the Emergency
15 Rental Assistance Program, and then feel free
16 to provide updates on your numbers.

17 WITNESS MATLOCK: Very good. Thank
18 you, your Honor, Commissioner, colleagues.
19 Great to be with everybody this morning, and
20 thank you for the opportunity to speak on
21 this very important topic. As far as getting
22 the program up and running, understanding and
23 how things are going with the ERAP program,
24 we did get off to a slightly sluggish start
25 that was due to just our internal process as
26 we had some staff changes, assimilating the
27 information, understanding the interaction
28 between the new ruling and our arrearage plan

1 that we filed and then getting familiar with
2 the HCD website. Housing is key,
3 understanding the role for the rent --
4 between the renters and the landlords and
5 what opportunities were there, what type of
6 qualification would be required.

7 Having said that, I'm happy to
8 report that our progress is going well as of
9 today. I'm ready to move into some of the
10 numbers if everybody is okay with that.

11 Q I think that's fine.

12 A Okay. And so our approach was to
13 focus on all of our CARE customers in the
14 greater than 90-day aged category to start.
15 We identified there was a total of 96
16 customers in that particular category group
17 to which then we then sorted through to
18 determine who was renters and who fell into
19 other classes. Other classes may be owners
20 or maybe just some unidentified applicant.
21 They didn't state whether they were an owner
22 or renter for some reason on the application.
23 What we did then narrow down was to our pool
24 of 32 prospective applicants, which is a
25 little bit more than I think we were asked to
26 do, which was 20. We did reach out to every
27 single one of those customers for our initial
28 assessment if they were willing to

1 participate or not. Of the 32, 8 customers
2 agreed to apply, and we -- of the 8, we have
3 confirmed that one has actually applied. So
4 that is our sample group.

5 Next steps for Bear Valley, we will
6 be following up with all the remaining 24,
7 and are probably 32 altogether, to see if
8 they have continued with the process for the
9 one or are they -- are they following
10 through, have they applied for the aid and if
11 they are willing to start this -- the initial
12 steps on the program with the remaining. I
13 think that will get us to at least our 10
14 sample -- customers within our sample group.]

15 Q So, Mr. Matlock, have you
16 communicated with the program itself about
17 what will be necessary on your end once the
18 customer -- for instance, for this one
19 customer who has applied?

20 A I have not. I have been on the
21 website. They have some PowerPoints. I read
22 through them. It seems to me to work very
23 similar to the HEAP program, which we work
24 with here in San Bernardino County. So we're
25 going to be really relying at this, at least
26 my understanding today, really from the
27 customers for the proper feedback to bring
28 back to the Commission.

1 Q All right. Now --

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Excuse me,
3 your Honor. This is Assistant Chief Colbert.

4 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Yes, Chief Colbert.

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT:

7 Q Mr. Matlock, hello.

8 WITNESS MATLOCK: Morning.

9 Q You indicated that you contacted 32
10 customers, 8 responded positively?

11 A Correct.

12 Q But all 32 had arrearages,
13 significant arrearages?

14 A Yes. They were all in the
15 greater-than-90-day debt category and greater
16 than \$50.

17 Q But just to be clear, as the
18 Commissioner and the assigned judge are
19 looking at this, basically even though people
20 had arrearages, only 25 percent responded?

21 A Correct, yes.

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Okay. Thank
23 you.

24 Thank you, your Honor.

25 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Absolutely.

26 EXAMINATION

27 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

28 Q And actually this is great because

1 there is really two parts of this
2 conversation. One is the outreach to
3 customers and how they respond to the program
4 itself, and then, secondly, the more
5 technical aspect of interacting with the
6 program about actually taking that payment on
7 behalf of the customer.

8 So, Mr. Matlock, it sounds like you
9 haven't established that second half of the
10 process yet. It is our understanding -- and
11 we may hear more from other utilities -- that
12 there is going to need to be contact between
13 the utility and the program in order to
14 validate the amount of the customer
15 arrearages and then figure out how you will
16 receive that payment on behalf of the
17 customer. Is that your understanding?

18 WITNESS MATLOCK: Yes, understood.
19 Very similar to the HEAP program. There's
20 usually some kind of income qualifications,
21 making sure that they're a legitimate
22 customer with a legitimate arrearage, and
23 then there is a follow-up process once we
24 receive the payment. That's right. Uh-huh.

25 Q Will it be yourself or someone
26 under your supervision that will be reaching
27 out to the administrators of this relief
28 program to find out exactly how to facilitate

1 taking that money on behalf of that customer?

2 A It will be one member of my
3 supervision, a staff member, the supervisor
4 of customer service will be reaching out
5 directly.

6 Q Okay. And do you have any timeline
7 on that or just specifically what are your
8 next steps?

9 A Our next steps are to follow up
10 actually tomorrow, the 28th of May, with all
11 the customers that are still pending. So I
12 think we'll have a little bit more
13 information and hopefully spur them along a
14 little bit. I think one final piece of
15 feedback from my perspective -- there was one
16 particular customer who was concerned that
17 maybe this might have been a scam. It's not
18 too often that the utility reaches out
19 directly for something and points a customer
20 to a third-party website. So there was at
21 least one of our sample group who had a
22 concern about that particular element.

23 Q That's interesting feedback. It
24 also makes sense, but I just wondered about
25 the next steps regarding your contact with
26 the relief program administrators themselves.
27 Do you have any next steps on that?

28 A My understanding was that they were

1 going to reach out once an applicant applies,
2 but I can certainly follow up on that as an
3 action item.

4 Q And to your knowledge, how would
5 they do that outreach? Do you know who they
6 might -- do they know who they might contact
7 or do you know what action they might take?

8 A Yeah. Typically when they call our
9 1-800 number, our customer service team would
10 direct them to a certain desk that handled
11 the HEAP and these type of additional
12 payments. Internally we have that person
13 with the knowledge to engage them to get them
14 everything they need, so we're hoping they
15 reach out and call us. I'd be happy to reach
16 out directly to them, if that's how today's
17 events take place. And that's the better
18 course of action.

19 Q Okay. Well, we will probably learn
20 more as time goes along, but it seems that
21 might fall under the category of facilitating
22 the process so --

23 A Okay. Very good. Thank you.

24 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Let's turn to each --
25 I will ask Commissioner or Chief Colbert. If
26 you have anything further to add to ask
27 Mr. Matlock, feel free. If not, we could
28 turn to perhaps -- let's see, why don't we

1 turn to PacifiCorp's witness.

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Well,
3 Commissioner, did you have any questions?

4 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: No. We
5 can move on.

6 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Mr. Matlock,
7 before we move on -- and this question
8 applies to everybody who is going to testify
9 today, and I appreciate Mr. Matlock's point.
10 It's concerning that you only have a
11 25 percent response rate, and, as Mr. Matlock
12 said, some people may think it's a scam or
13 something else.

14 Has there been thoughts for your
15 utility -- and I want the other participants
16 to think about this too -- about going
17 forward with the new program that the
18 Commissioner referenced and the increased
19 amount of arrearage relief funds to have some
20 kind of general public service announcements
21 or something else that would give the public
22 a sense that this program is real, that it is
23 available, and that there is really -- it's
24 to their benefit, and there's no strings
25 attached to it?

26 You may not have thought about that,
27 but going forward, it may be something to
28 consider and it would be appreciated if other

1 parties could address that as Judge
2 Watts-Zagha goes through the hearing this
3 morning.

4 WITNESS MATLOCK: Absolutely. Thank
5 you for the feedback. We will certainly take
6 that as an action item and make sure that
7 we're doing proper advertising for both
8 programs once they develop.

9 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you,
10 Mr. Matlock.

11 Q All right. We'll now have
12 Ms. Spires. If you could introduce yourself,
13 please.

14 WITNESS SPIRES: This is Charity Spires
15 with PacifiCorp. Can you hear me okay?

16 Q Thank you so much. Yes. I'm
17 giving everyone a chance to introduce
18 themselves and we're pausing, not only for
19 the benefit of the court reporters, but for
20 the benefit of all of us to be able to spot
21 each other on the screen.

22 Ms. Spires, if you could start with
23 your overall experience so far with the
24 Emergency Rental Assistance Program and then
25 walk us through the customer's application
26 steps so far.

27 A So overall, the process --
28 PacifiCorp has not received response from

1 customers on this program. From the very
2 beginning, we reached out to customers -- and
3 actually I am the one that is reaching out to
4 the customers on our list and providing them
5 with our -- my direct contact information
6 for -- to work with the case management of
7 their application.

8 And like I've mentioned, to date,
9 we have not received responses from those
10 customers that I've reached out to. To date,
11 we've had -- initially the very first week I
12 reached out to 11 customers and, thereafter,
13 5 customers each week. So as of the
14 beginning of this week, I've reached out to a
15 total of 41 customers and no responses as of
16 yet.

17 I send them an e-mail. It includes
18 my contact information, my e-mail, my phone
19 number, and also a flier for the program to
20 ensure hopefully that that will ensure
21 that -- to customers that this is not a spam
22 e-mail.

23 How the customers were selected for
24 the pool -- these are customers that have
25 been customers in the past two years and have
26 arrears greater than 90 days and they are
27 currently enrolled in paperless billing so we
28 do have their e-mail address on file that we

1 can e-mail directly. These customers may,
2 you know -- they may have paperless -- enroll
3 for paperless billing, but they may also
4 receive a paper statement so it could be
5 both, but they do have an e-mail address on
6 file.

7 We did find with other programs
8 that we have in Oregon and Washington in
9 calling customers we're not able to make that
10 contact. We leave messages. So I figured
11 doing the outreach by e-mail initially would
12 be a better or maybe increased response rate
13 possibly. That has been PacifiCorp's
14 approach on this program, and I am primarily
15 the contact person for the program.

16 Q Thank you. Ms. Spires, when this
17 program launched, we realized that other than
18 the customer themselves, only the utility
19 knows who has a lot of debt with the utility.
20 So in addition to the age of the debt being
21 greater than 90 days, did you look at
22 customers that have the most debt?

23 A That is correct. So initially the
24 outreach was for those customers that had
25 debt over a thousand dollars. That was the
26 initial approach. With the month of May, I
27 did pull a refreshed data and tried to do --
28 and did an outreach for new customers that I

1 had not reached out to prior that had high
2 arrears.

3 And the new data that I pulled for
4 the month of May was not limited to just
5 customers within the -- that's been our
6 customers in the past two years, but I just
7 brought, you know, just active customers that
8 we currently have.

9 Q And if we could turn -- (speaker's
10 audio dropped) -- your contact with the ERAP
11 program itself. Have you identified who in
12 the PacifiCorp service area is administering
13 the ERAP program and who would that be?

14 A So the local agencies that are
15 helping customers with this is Community --
16 I'm sorry, Great Northern Services, which
17 serves Siskiyou County; Del Norte Senior
18 Center, which serves Del Norte County; and
19 T.E.A.C.H., Inc., I believes, serves Shasta.
20 But I primarily have been in contact with
21 Great Northern Services. So those are the
22 three that I am aware of that are local
23 contacts for the program.

24 Q And have you prepared -- (speaker's
25 audio dropped).

26 I'm sorry, did my sound cut out?

27 THE REPORTER: Yes, it did. Thank you,
28 Judge. This is the court reporter.

1 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

2 Q All right. Have you prepared to
3 validate the customer's amount of debt and
4 receive payment on their behalf should a
5 customer successfully apply?

6 WITNESS SPIRES: I'm sorry. Say -- ask
7 that again.

8 Q How have you prepared to validate
9 the customer's utility amount of debt and
10 then take the payment from the program if any
11 of your customers do apply?

12 A I have not prepared, and so that is
13 an action item that I will be looking into,
14 although I do have this list of customers
15 that -- the pool of customers that I've done
16 outreach to and checking their accounts to
17 see what maybe they directly applied through
18 the housing. So that's what I've done is to
19 check in the accounts to see whether there's
20 been any activity on their account as far as
21 payments.

22 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Chief Colbert and
23 Commissioner, do you have any questions at
24 this point?

25 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Yes.
26 Thank you.

27 ///

28 ///

EXAMINATION

BY COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES:

Q So you're saying that no one has benefited yet from this program in the PacifiCorp territory. Is that what I heard correctly?

WITNESS SPIRES: The customers that I've reached out to, they have not -- they have not applied or reached out to me. As far as if any customer has applied, that I have not identified yet.

Q Well, but you would be receiving a check from, yeah, the local jurisdiction or HCD, so you haven't --

A I have not verified that, correct.

Q You haven't verified it or it hasn't taken place sounds like. And what was the total amount of customers that you identified?

A I've reached out to 41 customers so far. Initially the count of customers from the initial identified group was 55 customers. I reached out to 23 of those customers from the first data set. And then the next data set is where I identified the next group of customers to reach out to.]

Q Okay. Let me just make sure I am understanding clearly.

1 In PacifiCorp territory, there's
2 only 55 low-income customers that are over 90
3 days in arrears?

4 A I apologize. That was just from
5 the first data set of just customers that are
6 customers within the past two years.

7 Q Okay. Two years of customers, 90
8 days of debt, low income?

9 A Correct.

10 Q You only have 55?

11 A Well, let me go back. Those are
12 the ones that had the higher debt. I focus
13 on customers with debt greater than a
14 thousand, in that, yes.

15 Q Okay. I would be interested in the
16 universe, you know, because I think as we are
17 talking about, particularly the smaller
18 utilities, your work -- your great individual
19 work of reaching out to folks is a strategy
20 that might be worthy, if you're talking about
21 55 customers, but there may be a more, you
22 know, more resources on, you know, marketing
23 in particular; like you're saying it sounds
24 like you put an electronic insert into
25 e-mails with this?

26 A Correct. I include the flier from
27 Housing is Key.

28 Q And does that go out to all

1 customers with debt?

2 A So, for all the customers that I've
3 reached out to, that's included. The company
4 does include a link on our website promoting
5 the ERAP program. And on that website, we
6 have a link to Housing is Key, as well as the
7 flier. And in our inserts and onserts (sic),
8 we include the flier as well.

9 Q To all low-income customers?

10 A To all customers that are in
11 arrears, correct.

12 Q To all customers in arrears.

13 A Correct.

14 Q Okay. Well, thank you for your
15 efforts. Part of what we're learning here
16 today is what hopefully we'll get to,
17 obviously some of your colleagues have been
18 more successful. And I do think the -- some
19 of your colleagues have had the fortune of
20 dealing with their local jurisdictions that
21 received an appropriation directly, so the
22 cities and counties. You may be in the
23 category of the state funding that's gone
24 through some of the -- the partnership with
25 some of the local NGOs, but the
26 administration is still being done by the
27 state contractor. Okay. So --

28 A My apologies. And my understanding

1 is that the local CBOs are referring
2 customers to the Housing is Key. They are
3 not actually administering the funds. They
4 are just helping assisting customers with the
5 application process through Housing is Key.

6 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Yeah.
7 Okay. Thank you very much, Ms. Spires.
8 Thank you.

9 EXAMINATION

10 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

11 Q Commissioner and Ms. Spires, this
12 is consistent with what we've notated on the
13 weekly report for PacifiCorp that it appears
14 that it is -- the administrator for your
15 service territory is the State Housing and
16 Community Development Department.

17 And in great part, some of this
18 direction to the utilities was motivated by
19 expecting utilities to reach out directly to
20 the administrator to, at least as we
21 discussed earlier with Ms. Matlock, give that
22 funding entity a good contact to reach the
23 utility when they were ready to pay on the
24 customer's behalf. As you acknowledged, you
25 may not know every customer that applies,
26 because you might not reach the ones who are
27 applying directly yourself.

28 So just to facilitate the process

1 and also make sure that payment comes in, in
2 a timely manner we are expecting, you know,
3 you to make that contact.

4 A Okay.

5 Q I am not going to refer you to the
6 proper contact number because I haven't been
7 part of that, but perhaps some other
8 witnesses will have that, you know, state
9 contact information or you can check in with
10 our staff, particularly the staff that you
11 report to weekly about this progress, and
12 perhaps he can put you in touch with
13 somebody.

14 A All right. Thank you. I
15 appreciate that.

16 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: I will remind other
17 parties that we will have a chance for you to
18 add in a few questions when we conclude with
19 the four small utilities.

20 Okay. Do we have next Mr. Marsh
21 with CalPeco Electric?

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Just a
23 moment, your Honor.

24 WITNESS MARSH: Yes, your Honor.

25 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Sorry. One moment,
26 Mr. Marsh.

27 Chief Colbert.

28 ///

EXAMINATION

BY ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT:

Q Yeah. Thank you.

Ms. Spires, as some of the questions from the judge and from the Commissioner Guzman Aceves, there is no participant -- no one is participating in the program right now, that is as far as you know, correct?

WITNESS SPIRES: That is correct. Not for the ones that I've reached out to.

Q Do you have any thoughts about, especially going forward and as the Commissioner has referenced, with the state potentially doing, providing a greater amount of funds to do this, as opposed to just identifying who has arrearages over 90 days and just automatically, maybe considering automatically having the bills paid as opposed to having them opt-in?

A For the new funding that is coming through?

Q Well, if under the current funding if no one is availing themselves of it, and the previous witness indicated that also, it may be for a variety of reasons and in my conversations with the assigned judge, it is consistent, these numbers. It is not a

1 surprise that there is these low uptake
2 numbers, but the arrearages are, in fact,
3 real; is that correct?

4 A That is correct.

5 Q And if a disconnection moratorium
6 is ended, people with arrearages could
7 possibly face disconnection; is that correct?

8 A That is correct.

9 Q So I guess my question for you, and
10 you may not have thought about it, but maybe
11 it is something to think about, and for the
12 other party, is instead of having to
13 effectively look for customers, you have this
14 opportunity to do this, just say they're
15 signed up and if the arrearages can be
16 confirmed by you and the other utilities,
17 that a certain percentage would just be paid
18 through this program.

19 A That is certainly something that I
20 have not thought about, but something that we
21 certainly would discuss internally to
22 determine if that is something that, you
23 know, how we would approach that.

24 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you,
25 your Honor.

26 EXAMINATION

27 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

28 Q Let's turn now to Mr. Marsh with

1 CalPeco Electric.

2 WITNESS MARSH: Thank you, your Honor.
3 So, do you want me just to give you an update
4 on what we've done?

5 Q Please do.

6 A We've also, similar to PacifiCorp,
7 identified 30 customers, CARE customers,
8 low-income customers that have the highest
9 arrearages and we have reached out to them
10 directly through e-mail offering our
11 assistance in filling out the application to
12 get the funding. And, unfortunately, we have
13 also not heard back from any of our customers
14 to date.

15 We've also, in April and May we've
16 sent out in our monthly customer e-mails that
17 we sent to all customers, we notified them of
18 this program, provided a link and more
19 information about applying.

20 We've also targeted our whole --
21 all of our CARE customers that have any
22 arrearages at all and sent them a targeted
23 e-mail providing information on the
24 availability of the funding, how to apply and
25 where to apply with the link.

26 So we've done all that, but we
27 haven't heard from any customers to date.
28 And we also haven't reached out to HCD. I

1 have made a note of that and we will look
2 into that and do that as soon as we can.
3 Tomorrow I will be meeting with our Customer
4 Care and billing teams to determine our next
5 steps to that, and we will be reaching out to
6 them.

7 Q And, Mr. Marsh, are you -- oh,
8 please go ahead.

9 A I was just going to say -- share a
10 little more.

11 We have also reached out to all of
12 our community partners to make sure they're
13 aware of this ERAP program and to offer our
14 assistance in providing, you know, bill
15 validation or arrearage validation to them to
16 help fill out applications and we've also
17 trained all of our customer care
18 representatives to be able to provide
19 arrearage and validate arrearages for
20 customers when they get a call asking for
21 something like that.

22 Q And, Mr. Marsh, do you have a
23 contact for Energy Division, Ben Menzies,
24 that was in our ruling, or perhaps Mr. Gibson
25 has that contact? Because I'd like you to
26 connect with Energy Division that you should
27 be reporting to weekly via e-mail.

28 A Yes, I do have his contact and I

1 will reach out to Ben.

2 Q Okay. And similar to what Chief
3 Colbert asked about PacifiCorp, what would
4 happen to these customers if the moratorium
5 ends and they're in debt? What sort of
6 outreach would PacifiCorp do for these
7 customers prior to disconnecting them? I'm
8 sorry. I meant CalPeco Electric. I said
9 PacifiCorp, but I was thinking back.

10 A Well, you know, I don't have the
11 details, exactly the outreach. I wasn't
12 prepared for that question. I'm sorry, but I
13 will get the information for you.

14 But there will be, you know, I
15 think in another filing we made, there would
16 be a month of us reaching out to them and
17 notifying them that they're in arrearage.
18 And I think with that proposed decision that
19 came out, we would be putting them on the
20 payment plans automatically. So there will
21 be some time before we get to the point of
22 having to disconnect any customers.

23 But we will do direct outreach to
24 all customers that are facing disconnection
25 ahead of time, to try to either get them, you
26 know, on a payment plan or to make other
27 arrangements to limit as much as we can any
28 disconnections we have to do.

1 Q Well, I appreciate you taking a
2 stab at that question, even without any prior
3 notice that it would be coming. But on that
4 topic, when you say "direct outreach" -- and
5 I am curious about this because in your
6 filings, your utility does talk about working
7 with customers and, you know, the opportunity
8 to engage with the utility to resolve the
9 arrearage, and what do you mean when you say
10 "direct outreach," and specifically, does
11 somebody talk to the customer?

12 A Well, we do -- well, I guess, you
13 know, initially they'd get letters or mail
14 direct, you know, notifying them that they're
15 late, but 72 hours before we would ever
16 disconnect anyone, we do go to the home
17 directly and leave a note, you know. And if
18 someone is there, we will talk to them
19 directly about disconnections and try to make
20 arrangements for resolving and, you know, not
21 having to disconnect, making other
22 arrangements. Door hangers is the word I was
23 looking for. We do door hangers, but we also
24 try to contact the customer, when we go out
25 to do the door hanger.

26 Q I see -- excuse me one moment. I
27 see our hearing reporter. Did you need to
28 interject? No. All right.

1 And in terms of working or contact
2 with the customer, what about phone
3 conversations? Is there a role for CalPeco?
4 Do you have a staff person who does that?

5 A I don't believe so, but I'll look
6 into that and get back to you on that one.]

7 Q I see -- excuse me one moment. I
8 see our hearing reporter. Did you need to
9 interject?

10 THE REPORTER: (Shaking head.)

11 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

12 Q No. All right.

13 And in terms of working -- or
14 contact with the customer, what about phone
15 conversations? Is there a role for CalPeco
16 to have a staff person who does that?

17 A I don't believe so, but I'll look
18 into that and get back to you on that one.

19 Q Okay. I appreciate, you know --

20 A Are you talking about outreach to
21 customers through the phone or...

22 Q Well, I would also be interested in
23 if the customer calls do they speak to a live
24 representative, but I am, in this case,
25 interested in phone calling. Yes, outbound
26 phone calling. I think our first witness,
27 Mr. Matlock with Bear Valley, referenced that
28 they were actually making phone calls to

1 customers, not to all customers but for a
2 small sample group of 5 or 10 customers to
3 try and get them to apply to this program.

4 A Right. So to date, you know, we've
5 only done e-mail, and it doesn't seem like
6 it's effective. So I think I'll take that
7 back to our customer care team and see if --
8 you know, like Commissioner Guzman Aceves was
9 talking about, we have a smaller customer
10 base and a smaller number of customers that
11 are low income and in arrears that we'll look
12 into possibly reaching out directly via phone
13 instead of e-mail.

14 Q I think that's helpful considering,
15 of course, this is, you know, a different
16 program and a different. So we're not -- so
17 we're departing somewhat from some of our
18 standard practices based on the nature of the
19 times.

20 Are there other questions?

21 (No response.)

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES:

24 Q Well, you know, just kind of
25 building off of that for all the utilities is
26 if they -- and --

27 (Interruption by reporter.)

28 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Thank you.

1 Q Let me see. Let me rephrase this.
2 Are all of your customer service reps trained
3 on the availability of this assistance? You
4 know, I know many of you are familiar with
5 the LIHEAP program, and I would assume that
6 when folks call they can refer them to that
7 eligibility?

8 And it just was concerning that --
9 you know, you should know if anyone has
10 participated in the program because, again,
11 you are going to receive the check from HCD.
12 And so are you talking both ends of the
13 company here at the, you know, very -- on the
14 ground level with your customer service reps
15 to make sure they are aware, and on your
16 accounts receivable and that end, that they
17 are aware that if you're receiving a check
18 from HCD then there's someone participating?

19 Not so much of a question, but
20 happy to take anybody's thoughts on that.

21 WITNESS MARSH: Yes. So our customer
22 care representatives are trained on providing
23 information to customers about the ERAP
24 program and what the qualifications are so
25 when they do have contact with the customer,
26 you know, possibly calling us about a past
27 due bill we can provide that information to
28 them.

1 But Commissioner Guzman Aceves, you
2 made a good point that I'm going to follow-up
3 on to make sure that, you know, the other end
4 of receiving -- receiving checks from
5 customers just to make sure that our accounts
6 receivable organization is looking for HCD
7 checks and providing -- and updating customer
8 care and our regulatory department when they
9 do receive them. So we'll make a note to
10 make sure we're doing that.

11 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: This is ALJ
12 Watts-Zagha.

13 And I believe other witnesses you
14 could address this same question going
15 forward. But the one clarification I did
16 want to add is that I believe prior to
17 receiving the check there will have to be an
18 affirmative action from the utility. So just
19 adding on that there will be two steps there,
20 and probably that was part of the question as
21 well. But ideally HCD would know how most
22 easily in your organization to reach the
23 proper person who could confirm the amount of
24 the customers' arrears.

25 Chief Colbert, do you have
26 additional questions here?

27 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: No. Thank
28 you, your Honor. I do not.

EXAMINATION

BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

Q Okay. I'd like to get ready to turn to Ms. Mazzeo and her witness, and -- and I do hope -- I do strongly encourage the witnesses so far to make contact with our Energy Division and just -- well, you know, that might be an easy source of information just based on the experience we've had so far in receiving these reports from other utilities.

All right. And let's see how the sound and (inaudible) for Southwest Gas are this morning. Please go ahead.

WITNESS ANSANI: Hi, your Honor. I'll start with -- if everyone can hear me okay, I'll start with going first into we identified that our sample pool of candidates would be 110. So we immediately got into identifying what customers would be good candidates to reach out to, to hit our 110 number. We identified customers that were over \$25 in arrears from the time period of April 2020 -- April 1st, 2020 to March 31st of 2021. And we identified a tabulation of sixteen-and-a-half-thousand customers. In order to get to our population, we took two different routes. Well, I should -- I'll

1 classify it as three different routes
2 actually. One, we put all of our customers
3 into an automatic dialer to let them know of
4 the funds available and the eligibility
5 necessary and to contact a direct-target
6 group of representatives to enroll and to
7 find out additional information.

8 Then we began outbound calling our
9 customers. And to date, we have called -- we
10 have outreached to 769, again, through manual
11 dialing. We've spoken to 306 customers, and
12 we've gotten 134 customers to agree to apply,
13 to reach out to the programs in one of the
14 two avenues we identified to receive the
15 funds.

16 What we've also done -- the third
17 approach is we've used social media and our
18 website to promote the funds that are
19 available. We really just wanted to make
20 sure that any of our customers in arrears who
21 may be struggling financially have the
22 opportunity to find out about the program
23 that is available through ERAP and to know
24 where to call in order to get that
25 information. But we're pleased, to date,
26 that we've gotten the 134 to agree to apply.
27 So far we've confirmed 5 have applied, and
28 we're now working directly, as of yesterday,

1 with HCD to do the validation going forward
2 so we're not having to continue to reach out
3 to the 134 to confirm with the customer that
4 they've applied -- that we can do more of a
5 pure validation.

6 Q I see. And what is your intention
7 with regard to the customers going forward?

8 A Yeah. We've gotten a pretty big
9 response on our outbound dialer, and we have
10 right now several hundred voicemail messages
11 that we're returning. We want to continue --
12 I know we've reached the threshold. Now, of
13 course, we still have case management and
14 validation to occur. So I know we're not
15 there yet, but we want to continue to offer
16 this program to other customers and let them
17 know who to connect with and how to engage to
18 go further. So we're going to continue to
19 work with those customers.

20 Q Okay. And then just let me ask.
21 So you're the counsel for Southwest Gas,
22 right?

23 A I'm the director of the call center
24 actually.

25 Q Oh. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It's
26 very hard to tell on the video who -- thank
27 you so much. And the computer screen is
28 showing the name of your counsel. So that's

1 why -- that was my error. Perfect.

2 And could you please explain to us
3 who in SouthWest Gas' service territory is
4 administering the ERAP program? And I think
5 we have some notes on this in our report, but
6 I'd just like to hear directly from you how
7 many entities -- how many separate entities
8 you need to work with when you do that pure
9 validation?

10 A We're working with Housing is Key,
11 and we're working with the -- we're directing
12 customers to the state portal. And we're
13 validating our customers with HCD now. We've
14 just established the engagement model, I
15 should say. We will begin doing that now.

16 Q And how you did make contact with
17 HCD to perform the validation?

18 A In a phone call.

19 Q Did you call them, or did they call
20 you?

21 A We called them?

22 MS. MAZZEO: Yeah.

23 WITNESS ANSANI: We called them
24 directly.

25 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

26 Q Great. Do they have a time frame
27 for you on how -- is validation a discrete
28 process, or is it a multi-step, multi-day

1 process?

2 WITNESS ANSANI: We haven't started the
3 validation process. We just received
4 confirmation that we may begin that. So I
5 can't speak to the length of time but I
6 believe it to be a discrete process that only
7 our authorized personnel can conduct this
8 validation. We just haven't worked through
9 our first one yet.

10 Q I'm just trying to get a sense of
11 how long it's going to take to work through
12 the first one.

13 A We can follow-up after we've
14 conducted our first one, which I believe we
15 will be doing in the next few days, just to
16 say logistically how that occurred.

17 Q All right. I'm interested in that
18 because it does seem like that is the
19 affirmative action on the utilities' part,
20 and then as part -- do you have a payment --
21 a way to receive the management in place as
22 well, or is that something you're going to be
23 working through and how?

24 A That is something we've discussed
25 as well. And today our process is that we
26 receive checks for payment, but it's not an
27 electronic transfer.

28 Q Is that process just for any

1 customer paying their bill, or are you saying
2 just with this ERAP program, that's your
3 process?

4 A It's actually with -- it was the
5 same process we used to receive CARE's funds.
6 It's the same process we receive as agency
7 funds. So it's not just ERAP, but it's when
8 we have a separate entity paying on behalf of
9 other customers is how it works.

10 Q Okay. That's helpful. And do you
11 have any way that you will know if a customer
12 who you've not reached out to and encouraged
13 to apply -- if just other customers find out
14 about the program and apply, will you know
15 and track the payments on those customer
16 accounts and how?

17 A We will. We are in the process of
18 adding this payment code classification,
19 which we do for all of our agencies today.
20 We do for CARE's fund as well. Every time we
21 have a new payment stream, we add an
22 additional classification of that payment
23 stream so we can continue to monitor the
24 accounts that we're receiving funds on that.
25 So we're adding our own classification that
26 is titled ERAP.

27 Q Do you have any sense of whether
28 the full 12 months or the full amount of

1 arrears are going to get paid through this
2 program for those five customers?

3 A For the -- do I have a --

4 Q Well --

5 A In terms of what funds are
6 available and how much they owe in arrears?

7 Q Sorry. Just getting back to the
8 bigger picture goal, this program seems to
9 have no dollar limit. It's just the full 12
10 months of the Coronavirus period for ERAP
11 purposes is available to be paid. Do you
12 expect those 5 customers to have all their
13 arrearages paid through ERAP once the process
14 is complete?

15 A The 5 customers we have looked at
16 their delinquencies, their delinquencies are
17 within these past 12 months. So based on
18 what we know of the program, I would say it
19 is likely that that would get covered again
20 because their arrears do not date back prior
21 to the prior -- the last 12 months. So I
22 believe that I -- we'll certainly continue to
23 monitor to see if that holds true.

24 Q Okay. Great. And then back again
25 to the bigger picture for the next iteration
26 of relief funding for your customers. Are
27 there any particular difficult points or
28 recommendations you have when we -- for the

1 next program for relief that you could point
2 to? What are barriers and recommendations to
3 overcome them based on your experience with
4 ERAP?

5 A I -- yes. I think for Southwest
6 Gas, our customers weren't surprised by this.
7 We've been doing a great deal of outreach
8 over the past 13 months based on what has
9 been -- has been occurring and have used all
10 of our payment stream. So I don't believe
11 we've caught any of our customers off guard
12 with what we're attempting to do to identify
13 customers who need our help.

14 I would say one of the biggest
15 obstacles to overcome specifically with ERAP
16 is just making sure that we've got that
17 interconnectivity with the entities that are
18 going to be distributing the payments, making
19 sure that we've got that good connection and
20 can validate. Because what I did not want to
21 continue to do was to continue to call
22 customers that we've called multiple times to
23 say, "Hey, you said you were going to do it.
24 Have you followed up and did it?" That's --
25 it's good to get to the point to where the
26 HCD is going to validate for us. So I think
27 that is definitely something we want to carry
28 forward with future plans so that we're

1 validating it with the entity distributing
2 the funds.

3 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Okay. I'd like to
4 open it up for additional questions.

5 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: I don't
6 have any additional ones, Judge Watts-Zagha.
7 But I want to thank Southwest Gas for some of
8 their proactive work in this area and other
9 areas, and I'm glad that that connection with
10 HCD has been connected, and it really seems
11 to be a critical element for success.

12 Thank you.

13 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

14 Q Yes. Actually, one other question
15 has come to my mind. And you do work with
16 your overlapping water utilities; is that
17 right?

18 WITNESS ANSANI: We did an information
19 -- yes. We did an information exchange with
20 them, your Honor. From that -- that was
21 where we started actually, and we were only
22 to identify 7 common customers that met the
23 criteria. So that's when we expanded our
24 pool and took the additional avenues to
25 broaden our population.

26 Q Have any of those 7 customers
27 pursued the application?

28 A I will have to follow-up on that.

1 I know they are not one of the 5, but I want
2 to follow-up if they were of the 134 that
3 agreed to apply, and I can provide that
4 response to you.

5 Q Okay. And did you understand the
6 intent behind that coordination --
7 coordinating with your overlap?

8 A Identifying the customers that had
9 a common need between the two organizations?

10 Q (Nodding head).

11 A Yes.

12 Q Great. Yes. It seemed likely, you
13 know, if a customer has utilities -- it
14 doesn't seem likely. It seems possible that
15 they might have utilities -- arrearages with
16 two utilities, and since the application is
17 one event, that they could address both
18 arrearages at the same time.

19 Okay. I think at this point, we
20 are going to now actually call -- if there
21 are -- this is a good opportunity for all
22 parties to understand the experience of the
23 small and multi-jurisdictional utilities with
24 regard to this program as we're all
25 continuing to develop recommendations going
26 forward. So I did want to now suggest other
27 parties participating. If you have a
28 question for any of these four witnesses, I

1 am going to be taking a look at the screen
2 and see if anyone is able to raise their
3 electronic hand ideally. And if the
4 electronic hands -- I think that is the best
5 option for indicating your interest if you
6 have a question you'd like to ask.

7 And if you would also like to turn
8 on your screen and raise your real hand,
9 that's an option as well, but I'm not
10 actually seeing any parties at this point
11 raising their hand. Oh, I do. I do see a
12 party.

13 I think Center for Accessible
14 Technology, Melissa Kasnitz, please put your
15 hand down and turn on your microphone and
16 proceed. Ms. Kasnitz, I would also suggest
17 you turn on your camera as well as
18 microphone. That would be quite helpful, if
19 you can?

20 MR. HAGA: I have made Melissa Kasnitz
21 a panelist so she can control her microphone
22 and camera.

23 MS. KASNITZ: Thank you. This is
24 something that you've covered, your Honor.

25 EXAMINATION

26 BY MS. KASNITZ:

27 Q So maybe I'm just being redundant
28 here. But I'm extremely surprised that only

1 Southwest Gas of the speakers has reached out
2 to the program and established contact. My
3 understanding back from the initial ruling
4 was that was something that the utilities
5 were being directed to do.

6 So to the extent that this is a
7 question, I guess the question is how did the
8 other utilities interpret the direction to
9 establish this process without including the
10 need to reach out to the program to
11 facilitate in exchange of information?

12 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Ms. Kasnitz, is that
13 a question for a particular witness, or is it
14 for me?

15 MS. KASNITZ: It's, I guess, to all of
16 the witnesses except Southwest Gas since
17 Southwest Gas clearly did interpret the
18 ruling to mean that, and I don't know whether
19 it has a good answer. But I don't want to
20 take up too much time, but --

21 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Your Honor.

22 MS. KASNITZ -- it's a source of
23 concern.

24 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Your Honor,
25 this is Assistant Chief Colbert. I think the
26 more relevant question is going forward. I'm
27 not sure it's necessarily beneficial to ask
28 them how they interpreted the direction.

1 This is not the purpose of this.

2 MS. KASNITZ: Thank you, your Honor. I
3 agree. That's more helpful.

4 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Do you
5 understand going forward what the program is
6 intended to do, what Commissioner Guzman
7 Aceves and Judge Watts-Zagha want to make
8 sure that the program is adopted, you know,
9 what was understood and not understood, okay,
10 fine. But what is understood now.

11 MS. KASNITZ: (Nodding head.)

12 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Okay. This is ALJ
13 Watts-Zagha.

14 So we won't have anyone answer this
15 question. But I also did want to note that
16 Bear Valley has also made calls to their
17 customers, and they were the first witness to
18 speak on this.

19 Okay. Let's ask if -- Greenlining.
20 Mad Stano, are you available to ask a
21 question, and please put your hand down.

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY MX. STANO:

24 Q Thank you, your Honor. So my
25 question also, similarly, is for all the
26 witnesses with the exception of Southwest Gas
27 who already addressed this. If you could
28 please share more information on whether or

1 not you all conducted any outreach activities
2 to intentionally reach customers who speak
3 languages other than English and may lack
4 access to e-mail or the internet.

5 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Okay. So the
6 question is with regard to in-language
7 outreach specifically or just a strategy for
8 customers who speak languages other than
9 English?

10 MX. STANO: Yes. If they conduct any
11 in-language outreach and if the other
12 parties, with the exception of Southwest Gas,
13 could address if they conducted outreach to
14 intentionally reach folks that lack -- that
15 may lack internet or e-mail access.

16 EXAMINATION

17 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

18 Q All right. Well, I definitely
19 think the phone calls on Bear Valley's part
20 do answer that question. But let's go back
21 to Bear Valley's witness. We'll go in the
22 same order with regard to in-language
23 outreach. Let me see who -- I hope you're
24 all still with us.

25 Mr. Matlock, if you could unmute.

26 WITNESS MATLOCK: Thank you for the
27 follow-up question. Bear Valley did reach
28 out to the entire sample group, and we do

1 have bilingual assistance available in both
2 Spanish and English. As far as the other
3 languages, the specific outreach was not
4 done, for example, maybe Tagalog or one of
5 the other languages. It's primarily in
6 English and Spanish.

7 Q Mr. Matlock, just did you call --
8 did you have Spanish speakers make those
9 phone calls?

10 A No. But we have staff available --
11 multiple staff that's available making the
12 calls. So they could have spoken either
13 English or Spanish.

14 Q Okay. That's helpful. And then as
15 we turn to Mr. -- Ms. Spires and then
16 Ms. Ansani -- oh. Not Ms. Ansani.

17 MR. HAGA: ALJ Watts-Zagha, you're
18 muted.

19 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

20 Q Oh. I was suggesting that you also
21 identify which languages are spoken by some
22 of your customers other than English. That
23 might be helpful too.

24 Let's turn to Ms. Spires.

25 WITNESS SPIRES: The outreach that I
26 conducted was primarily in English, and these
27 are customers that have e-mail address on
28 file.

1 However, on our website where we
2 provide a link to the ERAP program, that is
3 in both English and Spanish, and in our
4 outreach (inaudible) and inserts are in
5 English and Spanish as well. Those are
6 primarily --

7 WITNESS MARSH: This is Dan Marsh
8 from --

9 WITNESS SPIRES: Sorry.

10 WITNESS MARSH: Oh, sorry. Go ahead,
11 Charity.

12 WITNESS SPIRES: So those -- it was
13 just -- I just wanted to say that the primary
14 two languages is English and Spanish.

15 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

16 Q Okay, Mr. Marsh.

17 WITNESS MARSH: Thank you for the
18 question. We -- our communications that
19 we've sent out -- and they've only been
20 through e-mail to date -- were in both
21 English and Spanish. And we also have
22 bilingual customer service reps that would
23 take any calls, and then when we do reach out
24 directly to targeted customers, we will
25 utilize bilingual customer service reps.

26 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

27 Mad Stano, do you have anything
28 else?

1 MX. STANO: No. Thank you, your Honor.

2 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Great. Since we're
3 doing this in a panel format, ideally -- yes,
4 just listen to each other's questions and
5 just pick a topic that we haven't honed in on
6 yet. And I see there's two other parties
7 that would like to ask. We have Connie Cho
8 with the California Environmental Justice
9 Alliance, and then after that we'll have Cal
10 Advocates Ritta Merza ask a question. And I
11 think that's all we have right now.

12 Please go ahead, Ms. Cho.

13 EXAMINATION

14 BY MS. CHO:

15 Q So for the panel, I am curious to
16 know what process you have in place now to
17 follow-up and collect feedback from the
18 customers that receive additional outreach
19 but have yet to apply for the ERAP program
20 relief now. I imagine that reengagement
21 would be critical to understand how your
22 outreach can be more effective or what
23 outstanding questions they may have, you
24 know, invitations to focus groups or
25 standardized follow-up reminders and survey
26 questions. Perhaps they have preferences for
27 community-based partner outreach or --
28 they'll need to understand that it's not a

1 scam, as Bear Valley pointed out.

2 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you, Ms. Cho.
3 And since we are going in a round, I'm going
4 to suggest that Ms. Merza also ask her
5 question, and then each witness can answer
6 two questions at one time, and I can remind
7 you of the question, or the counsels could
8 remind you of the question.

9 So, Ms. Merza, thank you for
10 understanding.

11 MS. MERZA: Thank you, Judge.

12 EXAMINATION

13 BY MS. MERZA:

14 Q My question is on a similar note
15 regarding the application process. What
16 information do your customers receive when
17 they complete an application, and is there a
18 way for customers to check on the status of
19 their application?

20 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Okay. And Ms. Merza,
21 that's specific to the ERAP application. Is
22 that what you're asking?

23 MS. MERZA: Correct, yes. Thank you,
24 Judge.

25 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Okay. So to the
26 extent that the witnesses know. Great. I'm
27 glad those are related. Let's go again in
28 the same order.

1 Mr. Matlock.

2 WITNESS MATLOCK: Very good. Thank
3 you. Our approach is to call each member of
4 the sample group that has not responded to
5 us, to follow-up directly with them. We are
6 walking them through the entire process step
7 by step. We are giving them links to the
8 website. We're making sure that they have a
9 level of comfort and understanding of what
10 they qualify or may qualify for. We walk
11 them through exactly what criteria they need.
12 So we are really having that personal element
13 with all of our follow-up at this point in
14 time. It's a manageable sample for us. So
15 that's our approach moving forward at this
16 point in time with our smaller sample group.

17 As far as the remainder of the
18 process, I'm not a hundred percent sure. We
19 do not have an applicant that has completed
20 that. My understanding is that it's going to
21 work very similar to the LIHEAP program,
22 which Bear Valley is very familiar with. So
23 I -- that's where my level of understanding
24 is with the finishing of the process at this
25 point in time, the actual application itself.

26 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: And, yes, Ms. Spires,
27 go ahead.

28 WITNESS SPIRES: (Speaker muted.)

1 MR. HAGA: Ms. Spires, you're muted.

2 WITNESS SPIRES: There you go.

3 Apologize for that. So to answer the first
4 question as far as -- I believe the question
5 was the follow-ups with those customers that
6 I've done outreach with, and I provide these
7 customers with my direct e-mail address and
8 phone number as well as the flyer for the --
9 for the program. I have not received a
10 response yet to determine, you know, what
11 would be the next step. Considering that I
12 have not received any responses, the next
13 step is maybe to try phone calls. So that is
14 another strategy that I'm looking into. And
15 then if you can just -- the second
16 question --

17 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: You know, I don't
18 think it's relevant because it's actually
19 about the application -- the ERAP application
20 process, and you haven't gone through that
21 process yet.

22 WITNESS SPIRES: Right.

23 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: So I'm also eager, in
24 the interest of time, to move onto the large
25 investor-owned utilities because we're
26 actually learning quite a bit from this
27 group, and I assume they will have quite a
28 bit to share as well. So we will just have,

1 if you could briefly, Mr. Marsh and
2 Ms. Ansani, and then we will move on.

3 Thank you.]

4 WITNESS MARSH: Okay. Real briefly,
5 since we -- it appears that our e-mail was
6 not effective in getting customers to
7 participate in the ERAP, we will be looking
8 into direct contact through phone calls and
9 we can also ask them at that time if they
10 received the e-mail and what their thought
11 was on that e-mail and whether, you know,
12 they thought it was some kind of a scam or
13 whatnot.

14 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Yes. And then
15 Ms. Ansani, and then I will ask -- I know
16 Mr. Gibson representing electric utilities
17 wants to make a final statement.

18 So go ahead, Ms. Ansani, if you have
19 something to add.

20 WITNESS ANSANI: Yes, we just got to
21 the statement confirming with our customers
22 that they have applied so we haven't had any
23 need to check in to see what is the status of
24 that application. We're getting to that
25 phase now, so we'll ask that question and
26 find out fairly shortly if that's a
27 possibility.

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

1 Mr. Gibson, go ahead, and then,
2 Ms. Mazzeo, if you want to conclude with
3 anything.

4 MR. GIBSON: Thank you, your Honor. I
5 actually had a procedural question. It looks
6 like we'll be turning to the large IOUs next.
7 I know that one of our witnesses from
8 PacifiCorp has a potential conflict at noon,
9 so I was wondering, if she is no longer
10 needed, if she could be excused at noon,
11 assuming we run past the initial allotted
12 timeline?

13 I'm sorry, your Honor, your --

14 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: The small utilities'
15 witnesses may be excused after this.

16 I will also note that we will take a
17 break at noon if we are still going -- if
18 this proceeding is still going along, we will
19 take a one-hour lunch break --

20 MR. GIBSON: Thank you, your Honor.

21 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: -- for planning
22 purposes.

23 Ms. Mazzeo, do you have anything
24 before we move on?

25 MS. MAZZEO: Just briefly, your Honor.
26 First, obviously, thanks to you and all of
27 the panelists, Commissioner, the Chief for
28 your time today. We appreciate this forum to

1 kind of talk about best practices and where
2 we may be able to make improvements as we go
3 through this process.

4 One small point of clarification --
5 because we just got a note from our team
6 while other panelists were speaking -- on
7 your question regarding the data exchange
8 with our water utilities. We did, in fact,
9 have one customer from that data exchange
10 that was among the five who we have confirmed
11 applications for.

12 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you for that
13 clarification. That is very interesting.

14 MS. MAZZEO: Sure. Thank you.

15 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: And, your
16 Honor, just one point of clarification. I do
17 appreciate the promotion, but I'm Assistant
18 Chief, not Chief.

19 MS. MAZZEO: My apologies. Thank you.

20 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you, everyone.
21 We will swear in the witnesses for Southern
22 California Edison, Pacific Gas and Electric,
23 Southern California Edison, and San Diego
24 Gas & Electric as a group.

25 I will call upon the attorneys for
26 each of these companies and if you could
27 please introduce your witness.

28 Let's start with Southern California

1 Edison, David Gomez, I believe.

2 MR. GOMEZ: Thank you, your Honor.
3 This is David Gomez for Southern California
4 Edison.

5 Our witness is Eugene Ayuyao.
6 She'll also be able to clarify or update some
7 of the numbers from the document that was
8 circulated yesterday.

9 WITNESS AYUYAO: Good morning, your
10 Honor.

11 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Excellent. Yes, we
12 are expecting updates on the numbers and I
13 received notes from the many utilities that
14 you have updates.

15 Laura Fulton with San Diego Gas &
16 Electric?

17 MS. FULTON: Good morning, your Honor.
18 Laura Fulton on behalf of San Diego Gas &
19 Electric. Our witness today will be Steve
20 Rahon, the Director of Customer Operations at
21 SDG&E.

22 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

23 And Jennifer Reyes Lagunero, Pacific
24 Gas and Electric.

25 MS. REYES LAGUNERO: Good morning, your
26 Honor. For Pacific Gas and Electric, we will
27 be having Neil Singh, the manager for
28 income-qualified programs.

1 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Great.

2 And then with SoCalGas, Shawane Lee.

3 MS. LEE: Good morning, your Honor.

4 Shawane Lee for SoCalGas. Our witness today
5 is Ivonne Meza and she is the mass credit and
6 collections manager.

7 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

8 To the witnesses: Do you promise to
9 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing
10 but the truth?

11 Ivonne Meza?

12 WITNESS MEZA: I do.

13 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Great.

14 Neil Singh?

15 WITNESS SINGH: I do.

16 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Eugene Ayuyao?

17 WITNESS AYUYAO: I do.

18 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: And Steve Rahon?

19 WITNESS RAHON: I do.

20 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

21 IVONNE MEZA, called as a witness by
22 Southern California Gas Company, having
been sworn, testified as follows:

23 NEIL SINGH, called as a witness by
24 Pacific Gas & Electric Company, having
been sworn, testified as follows:

25 EUGENE AYUYAO, called as a witness
26 by Southern California Edison Company,
having been sworn, testified as
follows:

27 ///
28 ///

1 STEVE RAHON, called as a witness by
2 San Diego Gas & Electric Company,
3 having been sworn, testified as
4 follows:

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

6 Q I would like to start this process
7 with Southern California Edison. So, Eugene
8 Ayuyao, if you would like to generally tell
9 us your activities to date with the Emergency
10 Rental Assistance Program and then provide
11 any corrections to the reported metrics if
12 you would like.

13 WITNESS AYUYAO: Thank you, your Honor.
14 We appreciate the opportunity to provide
15 updates to our work on the ERAP program. As
16 far as the updates, I'd like to really divide
17 it in three parts. First is our progress on
18 our outbound calls, second is our update on
19 promotions, and, third, updates for our
20 (indecipherable) engagement with HCD and
21 other jurisdictions.

22 In terms of the outbound calls, as
23 soon as we received resolution April 5th, we
24 quickly reviewed the file that we share with
25 the water agencies and from there identified
26 CARE customers, low-income customers, who had
27 existing arrears. After doing so, we
28 identified those customers who are renters.

1 From that initial list, we got
2 around 3,300 customers who might be eligible
3 for the programs. After running those lists
4 in our call registry, we ended up with 2,730
5 customers in our list.

6 The ruling requirement was for SCE
7 to case manage 450 customers approximately,
8 and we would need to call approximately 1,600
9 customers to get to the 450 customers who are
10 likely. And, you know, we'll be helping them
11 with case management work.

12 Going through the table, the number
13 of sample customers who have agreed to apply
14 is about 132 customers. With that, we
15 interpret that those customers have expressed
16 strong interest in participating in the
17 program and, therefore, are willing to send
18 their application.

19 With the follow-up calls that we've
20 made, we determined that there were four
21 customers who have confirmed submitting their
22 application. We have not received any
23 requests for validation for those four
24 customers to date. So that is the update for
25 the specific tables.

26 As far as those customers outside of
27 our sample group, we reviewed the tables that
28 were sent out yesterday and there were some

1 differences in the numbers provided. I'd
2 like to provide some updates on those. In
3 terms of --

4 Q Let me interrupt and just sticking
5 with the sample group. So we didn't have any
6 of those numbers, as you'll notice, so I'm
7 just wondering what is the date? Did those
8 not reach us? When did those -- did that
9 sample group activity you described happen?

10 A Your Honor, as of our report on
11 May 24th, we actually stated that we were
12 able to identify over 2,000 customers, sample
13 customers, of -- potential customers who are
14 willing and eligible in the program -- who
15 might potentially be willing and eligible in
16 the program, and that was part of the weekly
17 report on the 24th of May.

18 Q All right. And so then when did
19 you find out that these several customers
20 from the sample group are applying or have
21 applied? You said four or five?

22 A Yes, your Honor. There were four
23 confirmed customers. And that occurred, I
24 believe, this week, early this week.

25 Q Okay. Thank you. And, yes, feel
26 free to discuss any and all customers that
27 you've validated and received payment on now.

28 A Okay.

1 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Your Honor, a
2 point of clarification.

3 Was it 132 customers participating
4 or four -- what -- how many are
5 participating?

6 WITNESS AYUYAO: So there are four
7 customers who have confirmed that they
8 submitted their application. We made that
9 determination through actual calls made to
10 the customers, follow-up calls. And in terms
11 of the line item 2, which says, "Number of
12 sample customers who have agreed to apply,"
13 there are 132 customers who express strong
14 interest in participating in that program.
15 We interpreted it as customers who are
16 agreeing to apply.

17 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: And the total
18 sample size was 2,000?

19 WITNESS AYUYAO: The total sample size
20 was 2,730 to date. We have called a total of
21 736 customers as of last night.

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: So all the
23 people in the sample size, the 2,700, only
24 less than a third have actually been
25 contacted?

26 WITNESS AYUYAO: Yes.

27 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Okay. Thank
28 you.

1 Thank you, your Honor.

2 WITNESS AYUYAO: Okay. So I am going
3 to proceed with the next table, "Customers
4 Excluding Sample Group Metrics."

5 In terms of the number of customers
6 actually validated, we have validated 209
7 customers from Inland SoCal United Way. In
8 terms of number of customers receiving
9 relief, we have 180 customers who have
10 received the relief and whose accounts have
11 been updated.

12 Inland SoCal of United Way provided
13 the 209 customers, but we have not received
14 the payment to date so we have not included
15 those numbers into the number of customers
16 receiving relief. So those are the
17 clarification that we would like to make.

18 In terms of the numbers of the
19 amount of relief received, the checks that we
20 would -- we actually receive from United Way
21 Orange only amount to about \$91,000. It
22 doesn't include -- even if we validated 209
23 from Inland SoCal, we haven't included those
24 relief funds as part of that line item
25 because we did not get the payment.

26 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

27 Q Ms. Ayuyao, I must confess I am not
28 sure how to understand the updates you've

1 just provided to the table called "Customers
2 Excluding Sample Group Metrics." There are
3 some numbers that we wrote whereas of
4 May 24th, and so the numbers you just read
5 are different and they are lower. So I'm not
6 sure if what you're talking about is
7 additional to what's on the table or it is a
8 correction to the table in and of itself.

9 I'll also note I understand from
10 the company's perspective you may track
11 payments jurisdiction by jurisdiction and
12 this table is simply one total number. So I
13 didn't really understand what you read out.
14 I wonder if you could try again and start
15 with is this a total company number?

16 A This is a --

17 Q Go ahead.

18 A This is a total company number. It
19 is a correction to the numbers that were
20 submitted -- that were sent to us yesterday.
21 There are differences when we checked our
22 record. I just want to make that -- report
23 those changes.

24 Q Okay. That's helpful now. Of
25 course I hope you can work with the Energy
26 Division to reflect that better in next
27 week's report. We'll take what's -- we'll
28 note what you've said today as well. But if

1 you see, you know, misinterpretations in the
2 future, that you do have access to the Energy
3 Division to help us better understand what
4 you're reporting.

5 A Yes, your Honor.

6 Q And so now the next question is:
7 You refer to one juris -- administering
8 jurisdiction. Did you want to share with us
9 how many different jurisdictions you expect
10 to be working with, and with each of those
11 jurisdictions, do you have your validation
12 process in place or, if not, what steps are
13 you taking to put that validation process in
14 place?

15 A Yes. We have -- currently we're
16 only working with United Way Orange County
17 and Inland SoCal United Way. But there are
18 79 jurisdictions that we would have to work
19 with, I mean in terms of case management as
20 per the ruling. So that's how we came up
21 with the 450 customer list.

22 As soon as the ruling came out, we
23 have multiple engagement with HCD
24 specifically discussing of topics around the
25 data exchange process as well as the payment
26 process. We had to set up secure
27 file-transfer platforms in order to make sure
28 that when we exchange data with HCD, that

1 we're protecting customer information. That
2 is currently being -- that was worked out
3 already.

4 At the same time, we also worked
5 out on submitting, like, the template in
6 receiving all of the information of -- all of
7 customer information because we're not
8 looking at just hundreds of customers, but
9 thousands of customers potentially. At the
10 same time --

11 Q Let me interrupt, if I may, because
12 you're providing so much information at one
13 time. You used the term "data exchange."
14 I'm curious why you used that term. To my
15 understanding, validation is a -- I'm just
16 wondering what data is actually being
17 exchanged between yourself and HCD. Could
18 you explain that.

19 A From my understanding, your Honor,
20 HCD would be providing us with service
21 account numbers and reported arrears of those
22 customers who have applied to the program.

23 From there, we would have to
24 look -- match these customer account numbers
25 with service addresses and at the same time
26 confirm that the arrears provided are
27 accurate and they were accumulated during the
28 time frame of the protection period which was

1 from March 2020 until June 2021. So that was
2 the extent of the data sharing that needs to
3 take place in order for us to validate the
4 information that HCD is providing.

5 Q Yes. And I'd like to follow up.
6 Is what you tell HCD more than a yes or no?
7 Yes, that is correct, the amount and the time
8 period, or do you actually send them actual
9 data on amounts and time periods if what
10 you've received is not correct? I'm curious
11 about the exchange from Southern California
12 Edison to HCD. Do you actually provide data?

13 A The information we provide, from
14 what I understand -- I have not seen the
15 actual template, but from what I understand
16 is that we are supposed to provide addresses
17 to the service accounts. We will only
18 receive service accounts and the arrearage
19 that were reported during the customer
20 enrollment.

21 We will have to say yes or no --
22 yes, that is correct. We will have to say
23 yes or no if the arrears are accurate and
24 they are indeed from the time frame
25 specified.

26 Q And it's your understanding that
27 you're actually adding a service address to
28 each account number --

1 A That was --

2 Q -- and sending that?

3 Did you say yes?

4 A That was my understanding, yes,
5 your Honor.

6 Q Okay. Fine.

7 A Okay. And then --

8 Q And then if we could go back to the
9 number of jurisdictions. You've got the
10 system in place with one of them. But is HCD
11 the payor for any and all applications
12 ultimately or do you have to work with other
13 jurisdictions to validate and receive payment
14 as well?

15 A We have to work with other entities
16 to validate payments and some -- actually
17 some entities do not require us to validate
18 payments. And we have had that experience
19 with United Way Orange where we receive a
20 payment and no validation was required.

21 That is why part of the work that
22 we're doing is to standardize some of the
23 submission of customer list to us, as well as
24 the payment process, because there are
25 jurisdictions who have less complex
26 capabilities in terms of submitting payments.

27 So there are entities who just send
28 checks only and Excel formats in terms of the

1 customer data information, and there are
2 entities who could actually send that
3 electronically in a format that we -- our
4 system could automatically read and adjust
5 customer accounts.

6 Q I see the Commissioner's head is
7 nodding, so maybe others were aware that
8 sometimes the payment -- the validation step
9 might have been skipped for customers.
10 That's new information to me and interesting.
11 Where does the payment get sent? How do you
12 know which customer's account to apply it to
13 if there was no prior validation?

14 A Well, when we received the check
15 payments, the first check payments that we
16 received, they have a list of customers'
17 accounts and the arrearage. We applied those
18 as listed on the check payment stub.

19 For others, they require validation
20 and we only had one experience of an actual
21 entity outside of HCD that required us to
22 validate. Those were the 209 customers from
23 Inland SoCal United Way. We received those
24 manually, I mean in a format that we had to
25 do manual validation for those 209 customers.

26 So we thought that standardizing a
27 process for all other entities was critical
28 in order to expedite because if you're

1 talking about thousands of customers who we
2 will need to verify, the process might take
3 longer, and it is for best practices
4 important that we do have a process to make
5 sure that this relief is given to customer
6 expeditiously.

7 Q You may have heard one of the
8 smaller utilities' witnesses talk about how
9 they wanted to make sure they were prepared
10 once -- before they outreach to customers.
11 They didn't want to keep telling customers
12 apply and then not be able to complete their
13 steps.

14 So for those five customers that
15 have applied that you've confirmed from your
16 target group, you know, which jurisdictions
17 are they from and are you expecting and
18 prepared to be able to receive payments on
19 their behalf? Have you worked it out for all
20 five customer jurisdictions or where are you
21 at with that because do you share the same
22 concern that you don't want to tell a
23 customer to do this and then find out there's
24 some snags in the process?

25 A If the customers are from HCD, the
26 process is already established to validate.
27 We just need HCD to send a validation
28 request. Once that's done, we're able to

1 validate quickly. We are ready for that
2 because we've established all of the
3 processes with HCD moving forward.

4 Q Do you think all those five
5 customers are with HCD or could they be from
6 other jurisdictions and then what steps are
7 you going to take to prepare to receive
8 payments for those customers?

9 A I cannot confirm that, your Honor.
10 I could get back to you to confirm if all of
11 those customers are coming from HCD or other
12 jurisdictions at this time.

13 Q Okay. I could just ask you
14 generally about barriers, but I'd just like
15 to check in with Assistant Chief Colbert and
16 Commissioner Guzman Aceves first about any
17 technical questions of this nature or
18 anything you'd like to ask.

19 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: No. I
20 think it's helpful to understand how, you
21 know, HCD is obviously being more thorough in
22 the verification, I guess, and many of the
23 locals took the customer kind of affidavit
24 as, if you will, for their debt amount and
25 seeing the need for the utilities to be
26 adaptive to each of those approaches is so
27 critical.

28 But it really sounds like the

1 communication with the HCD is fundamental
2 here, so looks like you're getting that going
3 and -- yeah, so I think that -- I don't have
4 any specific questions, just to say that
5 seems to be the most critical piece.

6 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you,
7 your Honor and Commissioner.

8 We're talking about the current
9 process with HCD. But as the Commissioner
10 referenced in her opening remarks, it's
11 anticipated that there will be a larger
12 program administered by the state. You've
13 discussed -- I think you discussed -- that
14 some of the challenges have been the
15 different agencies and entities you're
16 dealing with have different processes.

17 Would a standardized process -- if
18 new funding source comes online, would a
19 standardized process to address customers
20 arrearages be helpful?

21 WITNESS AYUYAO: I believe so.

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you.

23 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you. I think
24 I'd like to turn now to -- I'd like to say
25 thank you to you Eugene Ayuyao.

26 Q Let's turn to Pacific Gas &
27 Electric and Neil Singh. If you would like
28 to walk us through your ERAP experience, both

1 your target group experience and then also
2 your administrative processes in receiving
3 payments.

4 WITNESS SINGH: Absolutely. Number
5 one, I'd like to affirm that PG&E remains
6 committed to supporting customers as they try
7 to access all available sources of financial
8 assistance and fully complying with the
9 ruling from the Commission.

10 As of our debt, less data requests,
11 PG&E has called 576 customers and had 96
12 customers confirm that they would indeed
13 apply to the ERAP program. As of last night,
14 that number is now in excess of 700 outbound
15 calls made.

16 PG&E has already stood up -- I
17 believe we were the first to stand up a
18 process with HCD where we are validating the
19 accounts. To date, PG&E has validated over
20 8,900 service agreements, which equate to
21 2,668 unique customer accounts.

22 Prior to the ruling, PG&E had also
23 directed resources to marketing the ERAP
24 program, which include providing ERAP program
25 information to our call center
26 representatives who are currently calling
27 residential customers as to arrearages.
28 Since COVID began, over 180,000 customers

1 have been called as a part of this effort.

2 Secondly, there is ERAP information
3 on the PG&E website that is translated into a
4 multitude of languages. We have mentioned
5 the ERAP program in our residential customer
6 newsletter. We will be sending an e-mail to
7 all renters with a past due balance in June,
8 as well as a physical letter or postcard to
9 customers that do not have an e-mail address
10 identified.

11 We are also leaving ERAP collaterals
12 behind in the homes of qualified ESA
13 customers via our ESA contractors. We also
14 have various social media ads. We have
15 mentioned the ERAP program in multiple press
16 releases, which include our financial
17 assistance press release and our climate
18 change press release, and we have also
19 mentioned the ERAP program to our LIHEAP
20 providers so that they can share the
21 information with customers that come into
22 their offices.

23 Q Yes. Let me interject with a few
24 questions if I may. What is the difference
25 between a customer and a service agreement?
26 Like, why did you reference that we validated
27 over 8,000 service agreements?]

28 A So when we're providing information

1 to HCD, we're providing arrearages on the gas
2 account and arrearages on the electric
3 account. So, a typical customer who's
4 receiving both gas and electric from PG&E
5 would have two service agreements that
6 correspond to one account. In the future to
7 reduce confusion, we will reference unique
8 customers. So we have validated over 2,600
9 unique customer accounts.

10 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: You're muted,
11 Judge Zagha.

12 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

13 Q So 26 customers have been
14 validated, you said?

15 WITNESS SINGH: Correct.

16 Q And have any of those customers
17 received payment on their account?

18 A None of those customers have
19 received payment on the account. We spoke to
20 HCD. HCD has everything they need from PG&E
21 to issue payments. They anticipate making --
22 submitting their first payment filed to PG&E
23 sometime next week.

24 Q How long is that process taking
25 from the point of validation to payment then?

26 A According to HCD's estimate, this
27 is roughly a seven-day period. And in
28 response to that, PG&E is protecting the --

1 once we validate the customer account, we are
2 protecting the account from disconnection for
3 30 days.

4 Q I appreciate that. And I also
5 appreciate you mentioning that when you send
6 the information to the Commission, you know,
7 in the coming weeks, if you just use the
8 high-level terms for reporting, that would be
9 quite helpful.

10 A Absolutely.

11 Q And okay. And so I'm not sure what
12 else to ask because beyond the validation
13 process, there hasn't been an experience --
14 oh, yes. With the customers that you're
15 expecting to have relief applied on their
16 accounts, the 2,600 customers in the next
17 seven days, how will those customers know
18 that their arrearages have been paid; do you
19 expect?

20 A So they should be receiving
21 communication from HCD. In addition to that,
22 they should see the less payment dates on
23 their bill.

24 Q So, when their monthly bill comes,
25 they will see -- what will it -- how will
26 they understand it?

27 A They should see the amount that was
28 credited, the last payment amount, on their

1 bill.

2 Q Okay. Does PG&E have any way to
3 indicate how that last amount was paid or
4 will it just be a dollar amount, like will it
5 reference that you are -- this is from ERAP?

6 A No. And --
7 (Crosstalk.)

8 Q Not that it should. I'm just
9 wondering from a customer perspective, if I
10 look at my bill and you see all of a sudden,
11 you know, there's a different amount, how do
12 you trace back what that was? It might be
13 obvious, but I am just curious about the
14 message to the customer that they know that
15 this process was successful.

16 A Right. And I believe they will be
17 getting communication from the actual ERAP
18 program, once they have successfully
19 validated and they receive a check, but there
20 will not be any ERAP-specific wording on the
21 PG&E customer bill.

22 Q What about your sample customers
23 who are applying and you're tracking their
24 application process; do you have any
25 conclusion with them, once they're
26 successful, in place?

27 A Absolutely. So, and I can get back
28 to the correction of the metrics, but before

1 I do that, initially PG&E's intention was to
2 place the outbound calls to this sample
3 customer group. And then we had a process
4 that stood up with HCD where they would agree
5 to confirm that the customer applied and then
6 tell us if the customer was accepted or
7 rejected.

8 Coincidentally, on the day we
9 uploaded that first file for validation, we
10 received a ruling that instructed the IOUs
11 and I believe all of the utilities, not to
12 ask HCD for any specific reporting requests.
13 So based on that, we rescinded that request,
14 and since then, we have been placing manual
15 phone calls to customers.

16 Some of the challenges we faced
17 with that, is that only roughly 20 percent of
18 customers we are making contact with, of the
19 180,000 phone calls that I mentioned earlier
20 that are happening outside of ERAP, it's
21 consistent with that as well. So we're only
22 making contact with 20 percent. And then
23 customers that do say they applied, for
24 example, one week we had 46 customers agree
25 to apply, and then when we called them back
26 the next week, only 23 of them we're actually
27 able to make contact with.

28 Q Certainly. Certainly. I

1 understand. And that's the idea of a sample
2 group is a small number. So this isn't a
3 mass activity here.

4 And then I did want to also ask:
5 When you reference data going to HCD, do you
6 actually create and send any data for HCD or
7 are you simply validating and confirming the
8 data you've received from them?

9 A HCD on a weekly basis sends us an
10 account or a spreadsheet with one column of
11 account IDs. We return the same spreadsheet
12 back with the address, city and zip code of
13 the customer, so that they can validate,
14 along with the arrearages that were incurred
15 between April 2020 and March 2021.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're muted.
17 BY ALJ WATTS ZAGHA:

18 Q You do not actually receive from
19 HCD any amounts of arrearages for each
20 customer account; is that correct?

21 WITNESS SINGH: In our discussions with
22 HCD, we determined that the amount listed on
23 the customer application would not serve up
24 any relevance, because customers, at best,
25 know the total past due amount that is on
26 their bill. So in order to exchange only the
27 most relevant information, we know exactly
28 how much the customer incurred between that

1 period, so we're providing that information.
2 So they're not providing any dollar amount
3 for us to validate. We're telling -- they're
4 saying, "Hey, here are the account numbers"
5 and we're telling them this is how much these
6 people incurred during the COVID window.

7 Q So, out of curiosity, if a customer
8 did want to find out the past due amount on
9 their bill, what months they -- it's from,
10 how would they go about doing that?

11 A I do not believe they would be able
12 to determine that. So they definitely cannot
13 determine it on their customer bill, because
14 that has to be total past-year arrearages,
15 and even if they were to call into our call
16 centers, that's not how we -- that's not how
17 we bucket debt. In order for this
18 initiative, we have a separate process set up
19 with our credit department, where they are --
20 they have the in-detail information as for as
21 buckets of debt, 30 days, 90 days, 120 days,
22 et cetera. So there's not really a clear way
23 for the customer to know which is one of the
24 challenges of ERAP.

25 Q Well, would you say that's a
26 challenge for a customer who is behind on
27 their bill in general, that it's hard for
28 them to know where it came from, or is it

1 particular to ERAP?

2 A No. I would say for ERAP, in
3 comparing ERAP to CARE's funding, CARE's
4 funding does not specify a window of arrears.
5 So, CSD is able to utilize existing data
6 sharing agreements. They're able to utilize
7 our existing portal and just run with it.

8 What makes ERAP a challenge is that
9 the ERAP program only pays out arrearages
10 from a certain window. So now we get into
11 this a different validation. We have to
12 stand up different processes. We have to
13 have had a manual process going on. So
14 that's what makes it challenging.

15 From the customer perspective, it's
16 great that PG&E -- we're validating the
17 information on behalf of them to HCD, but
18 there's no real process for the customer to
19 get that information on their own from their
20 bill.

21 Q Thank you, Mr. Singh. It is
22 interesting to me because of course ERAP is
23 one of many tools a customer may use and of
24 course the goal of this proceeding is really
25 to help them address arrearages completely.

26 So just, again, from a customer
27 perspective, so they've applied to ERAP and
28 how will they understand how ERAP affected

1 the past due -- I guess what they see on a
2 monthly bill is one sum number, this is how
3 much you owe, right? Is that how the bill
4 looks?

5 A Right.

6 Q And if the customer, so is it a
7 surprise to the customer after the ERAP
8 payment is applied how much of that is
9 defrayed or if they wanted to understand, for
10 instance, if there's something outstanding,
11 how would they go about understanding why it
12 was partially paid, or what amount was paid,
13 or say for instance it's a month where they
14 also had their climate credit applied or some
15 other credit to their bill, or if they had
16 overpaid from the prior month. I'm just
17 hoping from a customer perspective to
18 understand how they could manage arrearages
19 that may not, you know, once this ERAP
20 payment is applied; like how does that
21 customer get that information?

22 A Right. So when the customer
23 applies to the program either through the
24 statewide portal or through one of the LSPs,
25 there is information on the website that
26 details kind of what the window is. If a
27 customer is going through a the LSP, they
28 would have that conversation.

1 But after that initial application,
2 the customer, based on the information they
3 get from ERAP, totalling, telling them how
4 much they were paid out, it's up to the
5 customer to understand, based on their
6 initial interpretation of the program that
7 let's say if the customer owed \$1,000 but
8 only \$800 was covered through the ERAP
9 program, they would still have a balance. So
10 it would be difficult for the customer to
11 interpret that.

12 Q Okay. I do think this is all very
13 helpful and it was -- I did notice when you
14 said it was actually so difficult for the
15 customer to tell the ERAP program how much
16 they were eligible to receive from ERAP that
17 actually now HCD has turned to PG&E to
18 provide that information because it's not
19 accurate or possible, possibly for the
20 customer to even provide that information.
21 So I thought that's an interesting nuance
22 here.

23 All right. And I know we are
24 nearing the lunch hour. I'm sorry that we
25 are taking so long, but at the same time, I
26 can do think that each utility's experiences
27 is very instructive for the relief we're
28 trying to get applied to customer bills. So

1 I think we should probably see if there's any
2 additional questions for Mr. Singh and then
3 we'll take a lunch break.

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES:

6 Q I just wanted to understand, make
7 sure I understood correctly, Mr. Singh, so
8 the first time you submitted a validation to
9 HCD was a few days ago?

10 A No. We submitted -- so HCD
11 completed their PG&E third-party security
12 review on April 30th. So they were eligible
13 to send us files after April 30th. We
14 received our first file for validation on May
15 10th and we returned it to them the next day
16 on May 11th. Since then, they have continued
17 to send us files.

18 Q Okay. You still have not received
19 any payment from them?

20 A That is correct. And we spoke to
21 HCD yesterday. They anticipated to send
22 their first the payment file to PG&E sometime
23 next week.

24 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Okay.
25 Thank you.

26 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: All right. I am not
27 hearing any questions from Assistant Chief
28 Colbert; is that right?

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ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: (Nodding.)

ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: All right. Okay. I would like to resume at 1:00 p.m. And it's just the large utilities that we'll be resuming with at 1:00 p.m.

We'll be off the record.

(Off the record.)

(Whereupon, at the hour of 11:59 a.m., a recess was taken until 1:00 p.m.)]

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AFTERNOON SESSION - 1:00 P.M.

* * * * *

IVONNE MEZA, NEIL SINGH, EUGENE AYUYAO,
STEVE RAHON,

resumed the stand and testified further as
follows:

ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: I am going to go back
on the record.

This is Administrative Law Judge
Watts-Zagha and we are continuing with our
hearing in Rulemaking 21-02-014.

EXAMINATION

BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA (Resumed):

Q Before lunch, we heard from two of
the four large investor-owned utility
witnesses. And one of those witnesses for
Southern California Edison, Eugene Ayuyao,
would like to make a clarification to
something she said earlier, and then we will
go next to the San Diego Gas & Electric
witness.

Go ahead, Ms. Ayuyao.

WITNESS AYUYAO: Thank you, your Honor.

So I just wanted to clarify a
statement I made regarding the date of

1 validation with HCD.

2 After remembering our discussions
3 with our meeting, back meetings, HCD will not
4 be able to provide us with customer arrears
5 information. And similar to PG&E, they have
6 challenges in providing that data. So when
7 we give them back the information, we not
8 only provide the addresses, but we will also
9 provide the customer arrears.

10 So that was it, your Honor. That
11 was the clarification. Thank you.

12 Q So, I have a follow-up. You've
13 already exchanged data with HCD, correct?

14 A We have not, your Honor. We have
15 not started that process, but the secure file
16 transfer process and everything else is in
17 place. So when HCD submits a request for
18 validation, we are ready to validate and we
19 are going to provide them with the service
20 addresses as well as the customer arrears, as
21 we can.

22 Q Can you refresh my memory though of
23 the payments you received? You corrected
24 that for the record earlier. Were those all
25 received without validation?

26 A The payments that we received, yes.
27 We applied those payments without validation,
28 without a request for validation.

1 Q Right. I see. Okay. That's
2 helpful.

3 All right. I'd like to ask Laura
4 Fulton, if you could -- well, actually we are
5 just going to go straight to the San Diego
6 Gas & Electric Witness Steve Rahon. Are you
7 with us?

8 WITNESS RAHON: I am. Good afternoon,
9 your Honor, and I'm pleased to be with
10 everybody today.

11 I wanted to start off by stating for
12 the record that SDG&E supports all federal
13 and state funding to assist our customers
14 with arrearage balances due to COVID.

15 I am going to talk about our
16 interaction with our local jurisdictions
17 first, and then I am going to move on to our
18 marketing, education and outreach activities,
19 and then I will conclude with talking about
20 our sample group activities and the work
21 around that.

22 So, with regards to our four local
23 jurisdictions, SDG&E has been working with
24 each of those jurisdictions since February
25 and early March. And what's unique about the
26 SDG&E service territory is when the ERAP
27 program began, HCD was not administering ERAP
28 in SDG&E's service territory. We had four

1 local jurisdictions that were administering
2 the program. And beginning in those -- with
3 those early discussions, we found that it was
4 really important that we establish really
5 tight procedures around the exchange of
6 customer information and ensuring that that
7 information was going to be shared securely.
8 We felt that it was really important to
9 establish a standardized spreadsheet template
10 that each of the four jurisdictions would use
11 in exchanging information with SDG&E, so that
12 when ERAP payments were authorized by the
13 local jurisdictions, we could process those
14 requests very quickly.

15 And then, lastly, we also developed
16 a validation tool in-house, so that when
17 local jurisdictions submitted their payments
18 or asked for validation of data, we could
19 turn around those requests very, very
20 quickly.

21 As a result of that work, we
22 actually began receiving ERAP payments from
23 our local jurisdictions in April. And I'm --
24 and then as we moved into May, and we
25 solidified the processes with each of the
26 local jurisdictions, we are now receiving
27 ERAP payments and customer files to validate
28 from all four local jurisdictions.

1 And I'd like to, at this time,
2 update the table that was distributed in
3 advance of this hearing. As of Tuesday, May
4 25th, just two days ago, we've now processed
5 and validated ERAP payments for 2,541
6 customers, and the amount of those ERAP
7 payments that we have received is over
8 \$2 million. It's \$2,070,096. So we feel
9 like where we're at currently working with
10 our local jurisdictions, that we have the
11 processes in place to process ERAP payments
12 accurately and expeditiously as they're
13 shared with us.

14 Q I'd like to interrupt you and ask
15 for your update on the table from May 24th,
16 please.

17 A Sure. So the table, the first line
18 is number of customers validated. That would
19 be 2,541.

20 Q Sorry. And you're right. Just
21 focus on those highlighted boxes, customers
22 validated and payments received, but you
23 mentioned the update you gave was from
24 Tuesday; is that correct, May 12th -- May
25 10th?

26 A That is correct, yes.

27 Q And so I'm trying to understand on
28 Monday the 24th, what were the numbers?

1 A The numbers on the 24th are the
2 numbers reflected in the table. It says for
3 the numbers of customers validated, it should
4 have been 688.

5 Q That's fine. That's fine. That's
6 all I wanted to know. Please go ahead.

7 A I would just point out in our
8 weekly report for Monday the 24th, we did
9 highlight that we did have some very large
10 pending payments that were in the process of
11 being processed.

12 Q Yes. Mr. Rahon, you just also
13 mentioned that you started receiving payments
14 in April.

15 A That's correct.

16 Q And that's what led to my question
17 about how many since -- on Monday, you know,
18 there were about 600 payments. So I just was
19 wondering how many payments you started
20 receiving in April, because it's, you know,
21 that's about four or five weeks ago.

22 A Right. That has really ramped up
23 very, very quickly. I mean when we started
24 to receive payments in April, you know, those
25 initial payment files and customer files,
26 they're smaller in nature as we get
27 comfortable with the process with the local
28 jurisdictions, and what's happened since

1 April is that that process is much more
2 streamlined, and the numbers of approved ERAP
3 payments from customers is increasing
4 significantly. And we feel like we're really
5 well-positioned to continue to process ERAP
6 payments expeditiously going forward.

7 Your Honor, I think you're on mute.

8 Q Did you say you exchanged data so
9 you also send customer data to the local
10 jurisdiction; can you specify what type of
11 customer data you're sending to the local
12 jurisdiction?

13 A We do not proactively send
14 information to the local jurisdictions until
15 they send us their customer files and payment
16 files. So we're validating the data as they
17 send it to us. And then we would, if there
18 was some data that that was of a -- that we
19 needed to point out as an exception that
20 needed to be looked at, we would communicate
21 that back to the local jurisdiction.

22 Q Do you provide the correct data or
23 do you just communicate back there was an
24 exception and ask them to resend?

25 A Where we can identify correct data,
26 we will. If it's something that we don't
27 have insight into, we just indicate that it
28 -- we can't process the payment.

1 Q Thank you. Okay. Go ahead.

2 A Right. So I would like to next
3 move into our marketing, education and
4 outreach activities.

5 So, in early April, we started
6 promoting the ERAP program. We began to
7 promote it on our website, specifically on
8 our COVID and our customer assistance pages.
9 And we also began to promote it through
10 social media channels as well. We then
11 followed that up with interacting with our
12 community-based organizations. We have a
13 network of about over 180 CBOs. We provided
14 them with materials related to ERAP, so that
15 they could be responsive to the customers
16 that they were interacting with.

17 We also armed our energy service
18 specialists in our call center with talking
19 points, so that when customers were calling
20 indicating that they had some financial
21 hardship, we could be responsive to those
22 calls and to assist customers.

23 We've also began to participate in
24 some community events, labor council through
25 distribution drives. We participate in those
26 events. They've been held in April and May.
27 We provide information related to customer
28 benefits, including the ERAP program. And we

1 actually do have an event coming up here, I
2 think it's tomorrow actually, where we're
3 going to be at a City of San Diego event with
4 an iPad, where we can help customers enroll
5 in ERAP if they need it. And we can do that
6 for them at the event.

7 We've also incorporated in our
8 transition plan related to the end of the
9 emergency customer protections,
10 communications specifically to customers that
11 are potential renters to also highlight the
12 ERAP program, and we have been doing that
13 throughout the month of May, as we have been
14 communicating with customers.

15 Lastly, I would just add that what
16 we have planned for June is that we will have
17 a bill onsert (sic) in the month of June
18 related to end of the customer protections,
19 but also continuing to promote the ERAP
20 program. And we will also modify our
21 transition plan communications for June as
22 well to incorporate the ERAP program.

23 Q Thank you. And as you turn to the
24 sample group now, I would ask if you could
25 also let us know how any customers in the
26 sample group will be made aware -- or the
27 process will conclude for those
28 communications; will you be communicating

1 with them about how much you receive from
2 ERAP?

3 A So, as I move into our -- the work
4 that we have been doing around the sample
5 group, the way that we approach this was the
6 first thing we had to do was we identified
7 customers that were -- had arrearage balances
8 and they were potential renters. Our records
9 don't necessarily track customers that are
10 identified as renters or non-renters, but we
11 do have some information in our system that
12 gives us a strong indication whether or not a
13 customer is a renter or not. So we first
14 identified that population, and of that
15 population, which was just over 80,000
16 customers, we identified our low-income
17 customers that had arrearage balances greater
18 than \$50. And that was the general
19 population that we used. And then we used a
20 randomized selection method to identify
21 customers to reach out to.

22 The sample or the -- yeah, the
23 sample group size we were targeting was
24 around -- was 60 customers, based on the
25 ruling. And we expected that we were going
26 to have to call over 500 customers to be able
27 to get a sample of that number of customers.
28 We ended up trying to call over 600

1 customers. We called them at least two or
2 three times. And from that -- that outreach,
3 we were able to identify 103 customers as
4 part of our sample group.

5 And so if I turn to the table, so
6 our sample group is 103. We have 69
7 customers that agreed to apply and we have 34
8 customers that have applied out of that
9 sample group. And of those sample customers,
10 we validated 6 customers and we received
11 payments for 6 customers. And those payment
12 amounts have been for just over \$3,000.]

13 Q Four or six customers total?

14 A Yeah. So on average, it's actually
15 \$506 per customer.

16 Q Do you have a sense of whether
17 those six customers now have -- are current
18 on their bills?

19 A I do not have that information in
20 front of me, but you know, I will say that
21 based on those six customers, we do know that
22 the debt relief that they received on average
23 was 78 percent of their COVID period debit.
24 So...

25 Q Thank you for that, that
26 percentage. That's helpful. And was it from
27 more than one jurisdiction, or was it just
28 from one jurisdiction, these six customers?

1 A I don't have that breakdown, but we
2 can provide that later in our weekly reports,
3 if you need it.

4 The other thing I would add with
5 regards to our calling campaign, because I
6 think these are -- these may go to the
7 questions of barriers, one is, is that over
8 60 percent of the customers we attempted to
9 contact we were not able to reach. So of
10 that population of over 600 customers, we
11 tried to call we either had to leave a
12 message or we were not able to leave a
13 message for customers even though we had
14 attempted to reach, you know, to contact them
15 two or three times. And so, you know, one of
16 the things about -- what we speculate is
17 that, you know, customers that are past due
18 would not expect to receive a call like that
19 from us, and so they could -- they could
20 think that it's a scam, or they could think
21 it's maybe a collection agency. You know,
22 perhaps that might be -- might be the reason
23 why we didn't have as many customers engage
24 with us when we reached out to them in that
25 fashion.

26 Q Did you -- you mentioned that you
27 randomly selected, and so did you choose
28 customers with the highest debt or it could

1 have been any amount of debt -- between any
2 range of debt?

3 A Any range of debit. Yeah, we just
4 took a randomized sample. They had to be
5 more in than \$50 in arrears, but it was
6 randomized. We also, though -- we made sure
7 that we did select of our sample group 20
8 customers that have -- that overlap with our
9 water agencies, and we -- and we identified
10 that -- those customers through the
11 low-income exchange data that we exchange
12 with those water agencies. So they were also
13 part of our sample group.

14 And so -- and then -- and then one
15 other follow-up. To the customers that we
16 were unable to reach, we actually --
17 actually, we did it to all customers. We
18 actually sent a follow-up e-mail after we had
19 tried to reach out to these customers, again,
20 to promote the ERAP program and to let them
21 know that, you know, our outreach to them
22 wasn't a scam. We're not a debt collector.
23 We're there to help them and encourage them
24 to take advantage of the ERAP program if they
25 are, in fact, eligible. And they can reach
26 out to us if they have -- have any more
27 questions. So we did close the loop on the
28 calling campaign with an e-mail to all of

1 those customers.

2 Q Did you have any barriers or --
3 from the administrative process with the four
4 jurisdictions that you would identify?

5 A You know, it was a challenge to
6 work with them to ensure that we had a
7 consistent customer file and payment
8 template, you know, to overcome some of the
9 customer privacy concerns that existed and
10 ensure that we were using tools that
11 protected the customer information,
12 particularly in transit, as we were
13 exchanging information. Those were
14 challenges. We overcame them. And I think
15 now we're working really well together, and I
16 think we've got a really good process going
17 forward.

18 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: All right. I will
19 turn and see if there are other questions
20 from the virtual dais.

21 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: I don't
22 have much of a question. I just wanted to
23 acknowledge that -- the stark difference and
24 appreciate the proactivity that San Diego has
25 taken. I know that early on in our
26 discussions with the HCD, it was helpful to
27 have San Diego already having successfully
28 working with their locals to kind of have,

1 even HCD, you know, learning as they are
2 going as well.

3 And of course, there is so much more
4 still to be done, but I think it is very good
5 to see that you have a uniform template, that
6 you have a continuous adaptive approach to
7 this. And certainly the numbers are
8 proportionately higher for San Diego. So I
9 think you have shared a lot of strategies
10 that hopefully your colleagues can adapt
11 quickly -- adopt them quickly. Thank you.

12 WITNESS RAHON: Thank you,
13 Commissioner.

14 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Do you have
15 any thoughts -- as the Commissioner noted,
16 your success rate has been higher than
17 other -- other -- other parties we have heard
18 from today. But a question that I asked this
19 morning, do you have a thought or opinion
20 about -- which is essentially a program where
21 customers with arrearages opt in as opposed
22 to something where you're placed into the
23 program and the standardized method is used
24 to address the arrearages, if that makes
25 sense?

26 WITNESS RAHON: It does and it's a
27 really good question. Yeah. This -- the
28 ERAP program is an opt-in program, and

1 therefore, you do need the customer to act,
2 and then we need to set up the business and
3 the system process. This is to ensure the
4 customer receives payment. A more
5 streamlined approach would certainly be
6 providing the stimulus moneys directly to the
7 utilities. We do know which customers are in
8 arrears. And we could, with the right, clear
9 direction from either the state or the
10 Commission as to how to apply those payments,
11 we could do that in a more streamlined
12 fashion.

13 What we would be looking for is -- I
14 think the thing that you would really need to
15 ensure is that we did get clear direction on
16 how the moneys are to be applied. But we
17 certainly, as the utilities, know which
18 customers are in arrears and likely need
19 assistance.

20 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Okay.

21 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

22 Q All right. I'd like to turn now --
23 thank you, Mr. Rahon.

24 And I will turn now to Southern
25 California Gas Company. If we could have
26 Ivonne Meza introduce herself, please.

27 WITNESS MEZA: Good afternoon. Ivonne
28 Meza representing SoCalGas.

1 And I wanted to start out by walking
2 you through some of our process of what we
3 did. We did -- performed outreach based on
4 the ALJ's ruling starting April 5th. We also
5 worked with HCD and customers that had
6 applied directly through HCD apart from our
7 outreach as well as worked with counties in
8 our service territory to make these goals and
9 these numbers.

10 So one of the first things we did
11 was identify a pool of likely and willing and
12 eligible customers. We started with the
13 water exchange with the water utilities for
14 our CARE customers. And there were six water
15 utilities that we were working with. We were
16 able to obtain customers that were likely
17 renters, based on the information in our
18 system, as well as had outstanding debt from
19 the period that HCD was requesting, which was
20 April 1st, 2020 through March 31st of 2021.

21 Through that exchange, we identified
22 9,540 likely to be renter CARE customers that
23 would meet the criteria at a glance. We also
24 obtained a list of 62 customers that had
25 previously applied for our arrearage
26 management plan that started in February and
27 for some reason or another had not qualified
28 or had not signed up. We identified that

1 they might likely be customers that were
2 customers that were needing assistance. So
3 on April 5th, when the ruling came down, we
4 started discussing these possible avenues of
5 customers to reach. And on April 7th, we
6 developed the list of customers that we would
7 start our outreach for.

8 Prior to starting our actual
9 outreach on the 7th, we started going through
10 the ERAP website and validating the
11 information, making sure that we were aware
12 of when we call customers what we would be
13 sharing with them and what information may be
14 required. We also made sure that our
15 website, as of April the 6th, so the day
16 prior, had information about the Emergency
17 Rental Assistance Program so that we can also
18 reference customers. And we made sure that
19 our social media team also posted information
20 on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. We
21 recognize that calling customers to notify
22 them about such programs might put them on
23 alert, that it might not be something that is
24 not a scam, right? So they might think it's
25 a scam, so we tried to circumvent all that
26 prior to starting our outreach.

27 Once we had the list on the 7th and
28 we had the information available as far as

1 who we were going to start calling, we also
2 developed some talking points so that we can
3 discuss with the customers the requirements
4 of the program and anticipate some questions
5 they might have and also how to communicate
6 with our call center in case customers called
7 to verify we were an authentic group calling
8 them for this service.

9 On April the 8th, the Thursday after
10 the ruling, we started making calls. I was
11 one of the first people to start making calls
12 because I didn't have available resources to
13 help me with the calls. So I had two
14 employees that I was going to assign that
15 they needed to clear out their schedules to
16 make time for this effort. So I started
17 calling customers, and so those first couple
18 calls took us probably about 15 minutes once
19 the customer agreed that they were going to
20 apply. We walked the customers through the
21 website. We orally gave them the link, which
22 was a little bit difficult because sometimes
23 customers were on their phones trying to also
24 access the link while talking to us as well
25 as answering any questions.

26 Some of them were unsure of how much
27 money they owed and if everything would be
28 covered. So we had to answer a lot of

1 questions when we actually did reach
2 customers. There was quite a high number of
3 customers that didn't answer our calls or
4 that we left messages for to return our calls
5 later in there.

6 Q Could I ask you, when the customers
7 had questions about how much they owed, did
8 you have that information available for them?

9 A Yes. We used our customer
10 information system, and we had that
11 information available because we knew that
12 that was part of their requirements of the
13 program. So we were able to inform them --
14 yeah, we also offered them something within
15 our service, which we call a statement of
16 account, that we can narrow it down to that
17 specific period to send them in case they
18 need it for validation.

19 Q Thank you.

20 A On -- I would say the next day, on
21 the 9th, is when I sent -- had two other
22 people join me in making calls. On that
23 first week after the 9th, so the following
24 Monday, the 12th, I believe we had reached 93
25 customers, because we were still trying to
26 fine-tune our process. We also developed --
27 we realized that one of the hard parts of
28 explaining to customers about the website was

1 that they may not write it down correctly if
2 we're telling somebody orally. So we set up
3 an e-mail in-box so that we could e-mail the
4 customers if they were okay with it. So we
5 asked them if they would be okay with it.
6 Most of them were. And they said, "Sure.
7 E-mail me the information." So we e-mailed
8 them links directly to just click, and then
9 it would take to the Housing is Key website.

10 As of May the 24th, we reached out
11 to 736 customers in total. Some we just left
12 the message, as I mentioned earlier. Some
13 have been no answer or no voicemails. Other
14 ones have not answered when we called but
15 then called us back subsequently. When we
16 leave our messages, we always make sure to
17 leave our phone number, our direct lines as
18 well as the phone number for our customer
19 service center as well as to communicate with
20 those -- to our customer service center or
21 call center. We memo the accounts so that if
22 the customer calls to inquire on why they
23 received a call from us our customer contact
24 center would be able to say it was part of
25 this outreach.

26 Our customer contact center was
27 also trained during that first week to help
28 customers with those questions that they may

1 have about the program, maybe not directly
2 part of our outreach but maybe just to assist
3 in answering if they had heard about it from
4 a neighbor or through some of our social
5 media campaigns.

6 We called -- we made sure -- apart
7 from the Water Utility Exchange, we also
8 called -- we made sure to call different
9 counties within our service territory. So we
10 called Los Angeles County, Orange County, San
11 Luis Obispo, Riverside, San Bernardino,
12 Ventura, Tulare, Fresno, Kerns, Kings County,
13 Inland, and Santa Barbara. So we were trying
14 to get customers in every area to be able to
15 take part in this program.

16 As of May the 24th, we had -- we
17 initially had 221 customers that agreed to
18 apply as part of our effort. We now have 182
19 customers that have agreed to apply for ERAP,
20 but the difference there -- the majority of
21 the difference is because some of the
22 customers have actually gone ahead and
23 applied. A few of them have told us -- about
24 four of five of them have told us that
25 they've changed their mind or they feel they
26 may not qualify. They've also shared with us
27 that one of the difficult parts is that the
28 application is so long, 36 pages. So in

1 order to help customers with that, we've
2 reviewed the sample application online when
3 we do the initial outreach call. If the
4 customer requests, we'll ask them, you know,
5 it's a long application, and we'll go through
6 a couple of pages with them to show them what
7 is being asked of them and kind of offer
8 advice, if they have questions, about what
9 type of documents they might need to submit
10 based on the information that's there.

11 Customers that are agreeing to
12 apply we're calling them back to check on
13 their status.

14 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Excuse me.
15 Sorry.

16 WITNESS MEZA: Go ahead.

17 EXAMINATION

18 BY ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT:

19 Q When you say "what kind documents
20 they need to submit," this is the
21 documentation that's required in the
22 application?

23 WITNESS MEZA: Correct. Yes. Like I
24 believe some of the customers have been
25 unsure of how much they've owed during that
26 period since they might have gone into the
27 pandemic with some debit already, or they
28 have bills that have come out after March

1 31st, 2021.

2 Q If -- and sorry to interrupt. So
3 if there was -- obviously you know for your
4 customers how much debit there -- how much
5 arrearages there is, correct?

6 A Correct.

7 Q And would it be a more -- could
8 there be a streamlined process that if you
9 all know what the amount of arrearage is that
10 that could be communicated more directly as
11 opposed to -- let's say it's 36 -- because
12 since you -- you are the holder of the
13 arrearages, you don't have to confirm that
14 they actually have those arrearages; is that
15 correct?

16 A I believe we -- well, we have to
17 confirm with HCD prior to them making the
18 payment. I believe they ask us to validate
19 that for the customer.

20 Q No, I under -- I understand that
21 if, but if there was not that intermediary, I
22 assume you are aware what your customers'
23 arrearages are.

24 A Right. So you're right. It does
25 not normally split up for the specific period
26 that HCD is paying for, the April 1st, 2020
27 through March 31st, 2021. What the customer
28 receives will be a lump -- like a lump-sum

1 payment of all of their arrearages through
2 their regular bills.

3 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you.
4 Sorry to interrupt what you were saying to
5 Judge Watts-Zagha.

6 EXAMINATION

7 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

8 Q Oh, no. And if you don't mind, if
9 you would identify if you did run into any
10 language issues or internet-access issues,
11 that might be helpful since you did have such
12 a step-by-step experience in reaching out to
13 these customers?

14 WITNESS MEZA: Right. So we didn't
15 have any language issues. The reps that were
16 calling, along with myself, we speak Spanish
17 as well. So we speak English and Spanish.
18 We had a stand-by rep in Vietnamese, and we
19 also had -- we just came across one customer
20 that spoke Armenian, and we offered to call a
21 language-line service to help assist with
22 that translation for him, but the customer
23 ended up declining. They said they would
24 call us back, and when we followed up, they
25 weren't interested. So we had services that
26 we were going to offer for LLS, but they --
27 we didn't end up needing them or using them.

28 For the internet issue, the only

1 thing we've heard is a lot of customers don't
2 have like a home computer. So they are
3 trying to work off their phone. And I
4 believe that's where a lot of them are
5 getting held up. However, we've gone around
6 that. We've partnered with a local
7 initiative. So it's called the LISC, Local
8 Initiative Support Corporation, and they are
9 partnering with local partner networks to
10 help customers. So they are setting up
11 appointments if the customer is interested,
12 and they'll help walk them through the
13 process. I'm not sure what their process is,
14 but I know that they agreed to help customers
15 with the applications with these barriers.

16 Of the customers -- of the 51
17 customers that we specifically reached out
18 to -- so 51 of them agreed that they would
19 apply. We have confirmed that 17 of them
20 have actually applied through our data
21 exchange with HCD. So we seen that they came
22 through on the HCD information that we had to
23 confirm, and their payments will total just
24 under \$10,000. So \$9,985. We set up
25 processes with HCD. Sorry to back up. So we
26 set -- reached out to HCD on April the 9th,
27 on that Friday after the ruling, and we met
28 with their team on April the 13th, the

1 following week. And we had various meetings
2 with them to discuss how it is that we would
3 validate the information that they needed.
4 Similar to PG&E's process, they send us an
5 account number, and then we sent back a
6 service address as well as the amount in
7 arrears for the period of April 1st, 2020 to
8 March 1st, 2021. It did take a lot of
9 meetings back and forth because of
10 cybersecurity concerns as well as
11 ensuring that -- making sure that the data
12 would benefit both parties that was needed.

13 We had our first -- we agreed on our
14 process on May the 14th, and we had our first
15 data exchange on May the 17th. It did take
16 longer than we originally anticipated. It
17 took us about a week to filter through the
18 data. We came across some scenarios, such as
19 customers who gave like a closed account
20 number, so maybe had moved somewhere in the
21 process and gave an old account number versus
22 their current one. So these were details we
23 had to work out with HCD, because it
24 originally would have just said "zero
25 balance" to the customer. But we said, "Hey,
26 there is still a balance in their future
27 account." So there was a lot of discussions
28 that needed to be had and meetings set up

1 with them as well as you see HCD's working
2 with a lot of the other utilities. So it's
3 not always same-day service when we call them
4 for a meeting or we need clarification.

5 Of the customers, the 17 that we
6 were able to verify, the debt that was
7 incurred during the pandemic will be repaid.
8 However, some of these customers did enter
9 into the pandemic with a balance. So some of
10 those customers, we've noticed that six of
11 them will be eligible to enroll in our AMP
12 program based on what we can see in our
13 system. So we'll be reaching out to them
14 once the payment is there to see if they are
15 interested in enrolling in that. Those that
16 have balances below the AMP requirement, they
17 range from \$5.43 to \$220. And there's about
18 five customers that have balances less than
19 \$100. So we are trying to see how it is that
20 we can help those customers still so that
21 they are in the clear or to get more
22 assistance if needed, maybe notifying them
23 about LIHEAP as well.

24 Q And, you know, because you had
25 direct conversations, what was the tenor of
26 the conversations with these customers? What
27 was the feedback you received from them in
28 this process?

1 A So a lot of customers -- at the
2 initial calls, a lot of customers were really
3 grateful and saying that they did need help,
4 and they were worried about how they were
5 going to pay the balances that they owed us
6 and, you know, sharing their stories. When
7 we did the follow-ups, a lot of them did let
8 us know that they felt overwhelmed with the
9 application because it was so long. So a lot
10 of them we were able to help convince them to
11 just, you know, apply. And it does allow
12 you -- from what we can see on the website --
13 we haven't filled one out -- but it does
14 allow you to stop because we noticed there's
15 a process that says, "Continue Application."
16 So we've tried to convince the customers to
17 maybe, you know, do a few pages at a time and
18 then come back. And then we've also provided
19 the LISC's phone number for that secondary
20 assistance if needed.

21 Okay. As of May the 25th, we've
22 verified arrears with HCD for a total of
23 2,693 customers, and the amounts we
24 anticipate receiving from those as a payment
25 is \$435,000 with 500 -- sorry. Four thousand
26 five -- four thousand thirty five hundred
27 thousand -- I'm sorry. I can't read. About
28 \$450,000 I anticipate -- I'm sorry. Too many

1 numbers. Beginning next week, we will start
2 to see payments trickle in for these accounts
3 based on HCD's conversations we've had with
4 them.

5 Apart from that, that's part of --
6 so sorry. There's 26 -- 2,693 customers are
7 customers that applied directly through HCD.
8 From our outreach, it was just under \$10,000.
9 We've also worked with the counties in our
10 service territory to offer assistance.
11 Riverside County was actually one of the
12 counties that we partnered with to work on
13 this prior to the ALJ ruling. They had
14 reached out to us, and we had been in
15 discussions with them because they had --
16 they were helping customers with these --
17 with funds for utility bills. So we agreed
18 that we would partner with them. So far with
19 the counties, we have verified arrears for
20 over a total of 249 customers, which is
21 anticipated to be just under \$76,000. To
22 date, we've received about \$31,000 for 135 of
23 those 249 customers. For those customers,
24 the guidelines are a little bit different for
25 the counties. They are a little more loose
26 than the specific pandemic period. So for
27 those customers, almost all of them, it
28 satisfied a hundred percent of their arrears,

1 so not -- not like the HCD ones where there's
2 a balance left.

3 Q Those jurisdictions have the
4 discretion to make that choice?

5 A Yes. Yeah. For payments -- one of
6 the things with payments, for the counties,
7 they've asked for payments to be set up in
8 different ways. Some have asked to wire us
9 the money. As well as some have asked for an
10 actual paper check to be sent to us. For
11 those with a paper check, we established a
12 special Post Office -- Post Office Box so
13 that we would know exactly that that money
14 was for ERAP versus our regular payment
15 streams.

16 We've received wire payments so far
17 from Orange County, United Way and a paper
18 check from Kern. For HCD, we will be doing
19 an electronic transfer. So right now we're
20 in the process -- we haven't received any
21 money from them yet because we're still doing
22 a penny test to make sure the money goes into
23 our account correctly and that there are no
24 issues.

25 As part of our CARE promotion to
26 let customers know about this program,
27 SoCalGas on April the 6th, posted on our
28 social media, Instagram, Facebook, as well as

1 Twitter about the Emergency Rental Assistance
2 Program and our information to call us and
3 contact us if they were interested. At the
4 beginning of this month, of May, we also sent
5 out letters to customers with a balance over
6 \$25 letting them know also that this program
7 was available if they were interested along
8 with other messages about -- that they are
9 currently in arrears.

10 On April the 29th, our customer
11 assistance program manager made a
12 presentation with the city -- with Riverside
13 County and tenants and landlords, as well as
14 the United Way was invited, as well as our
15 public affairs manager, to let them know
16 about the program and answer any questions
17 that they may have and let them know about
18 how to pay SoCalGas, if they have any
19 questions or concerns.

20 We also recorded a YouTube
21 presentation for -- for this program, and the
22 Greater Riverside Hispanic Chamber's
23 e-newsletter published a video link for their
24 customers and people that went to their
25 website to be aware of it. So we have that
26 as well, and I believe we've made a couple
27 of -- in working with the county, we've also
28 notified them that we have that YouTube

1 available as well, if they would be
2 interested in using it or if they would like
3 us to come out and talk to them about some of
4 these programs.]

5 Moving forward, we're just planning
6 to continue our outreach. We're still
7 following up at a weekly basis. We don't
8 want to be calling the customers too often
9 because we do want them to apply, but we're
10 calling them once a week to follow up and see
11 if they were able to apply or if they needed
12 any assistance, as well as we're still
13 getting calls from customers that we had
14 previously left messages for, so they call us
15 back and we talk to them probably daily as
16 well and tell them about the program.

17 Q Thank you. I don't have any
18 further questions.

19 Commissioner, Assistant Chief
20 Colbert?

21 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: I wasn't
22 sure, Judge Watts-Zagha, if you were going to
23 look at the chat now or later, but there is a
24 question here for the gas company.

25 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Is it from UCAN's
26 representative, Jason Zeller?

27 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Yes.

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Yeah, I think we

1 should turn to questions from the parties
2 orally. I am not sure if -- I did want to
3 see, though, Assistant Chief Colbert, do you
4 want to ask any follow-ups?

5 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you,
6 your Honor.

7 Commissioner, just to be clear, did
8 you have any questions before I ask a
9 question?

10 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: No. But
11 actually this is the first time I come to
12 appreciate that the application from HCD is
13 36 pages. You know, as I mentioned earlier,
14 it's very important to hear from all of you
15 what these hurdles have been because of
16 course we want to do our part to properly
17 inform the administration and the legislature
18 as they contemplate this additional
19 appropriation.

20 It's not only informative for the
21 current funding of how all the strategies
22 you're all working on can be enhanced, but,
23 you know -- we talked about this already --
24 but I had not realized that that application
25 was so lengthy.

26 Thank you for your update, Ms. Meza.

27 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you,
28 Commissioner.

1 Thank you, Ms. Meza.

2 Kind of in line with questions I've
3 asked a couple of other times in a different
4 way, do you have any thoughts on what a more
5 streamlined process going forward if the
6 funding that the Commissioner has referenced
7 several times goes forward? Can you envision
8 a more streamlined, efficient process for
9 addressing the arrearages for your customers?

10 WITNESS MEZA: So I think, you know,
11 the application -- sorry. It's so long. I
12 think a lot of our customers, especially in
13 LA County and a lot of our counties, are --
14 their internet is on their phone so they're
15 using -- so I think something a little bit
16 more phone friendly.

17 As far as I think what's a little
18 bit difficult for our customers too is that a
19 lot of them entered the pandemic with a
20 balance already that they were carrying over.
21 I think since the period cuts off also at
22 March 31st, we're at the end of May so these
23 customers have received at least two more
24 bills. If they're still having trouble
25 making payments, even if they didn't enter
26 the pandemic, that still leaves them with two
27 outstanding bills that they're trying to
28 cover.

1 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

2 Q Ms. Meza, actually, let me ask the
3 question in the chat from Mr. Zeller because
4 I think it's a technical question and
5 hopefully you know.

6 WITNESS MEZA: Okay.

7 Q When a customer applies to the
8 program, do they apply for multiple utilities
9 at once?

10 A I'm not sure to be honest with you.

11 Q All right. Yeah. We don't really
12 have a program person with us, although it
13 did appear from the applications that I've
14 clicked through that there was a place to
15 input arrearages from all utilities, hence
16 the idea to confer with water utilities when
17 targeting customers, but we can come back to
18 that.

19 Actually, I think it is a good idea
20 now to solicit additional questions from
21 parties. We do have, obviously, a range of
22 experience here amongst these four utility
23 witnesses. So hopefully if you have some
24 particular questions, we can take those now.
25 I'll look for some hands.

26 A Actually, sorry, can I update the
27 chart? I forgot that I needed to update the
28 information on the charts.

1 So for SoCalGas for the number of
2 sample customers validated, it shows zero
3 should be 2,942 customers, and the number of
4 sample customers that received relief -- the
5 amount we have received so far is 30,781, but
6 we're anticipated to receive starting next
7 week \$511,000 -- sorry, here I go with the
8 numbers again -- about \$511,000. So we'll --
9 we can update that after, I think, in our
10 reporting.

11 Q I do appreciate, yes, the update.
12 And of course you have another opportunity to
13 provide it in your written report. We will
14 continue to update these reports and post
15 them on the website. Hopefully we can also
16 streamline the reporting process with your
17 focus just on the high-level information in
18 these tables now that you are able to sort of
19 report dollars and numbers of customers
20 starting to receive payments, so thank you.

21 I see Commissioner Guzman Aceves.

22 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Well, I
23 think it's really an excellent question. I
24 certainly would want to follow up maybe with
25 our team and HCD, you know, just looking at
26 the numbers that San Diego has as an example.
27 The fact that you're there, you know, you're
28 in SCE's territory and LADWP, so there must

1 be a way to really, you know -- arguably your
2 numbers should be the highest because you
3 have so many more customers.

4 Maybe there's a way to build on all
5 of the existing customers that they have that
6 for whatever reason may not have already
7 sought the gas forgiveness, so maybe it's
8 something that we could help coordinate with
9 the HCD on. They're already eligible
10 clearly.

11 WITNESS MEZA: Right.

12 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Right.

13 WITNESS MEZA: So HCD did inform us, I
14 forgot to mention, that they do have -- and
15 this was as of a few weeks ago --
16 \$1.6 million that's already allocated for
17 SoCalGas. We were just waiting to go through
18 the validations and all the technical
19 processes in order to be able to get that
20 money.

21 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: You know, actually --
22 this is ALJ Watts-Zagha. Now I've become
23 lost. Were we talking about applying for
24 multiple utility arrearages at once or are
25 we -- is it something else?

26 COMMISSIONER GUZMAN ACEVES: Oh, sorry.
27 It's kind of an iteration of that really,
28 just thinking that, if for whatever reason --

1 I agree. I think the application allows for
2 that. But if for whatever reason, for
3 example, you know, some of the utilities have
4 been walking through customers' applications
5 for their debt, but maybe for whatever
6 reason -- nothing nefarious here -- but there
7 hasn't been kind of the full package. I mean
8 that's the case with the rental assistance
9 piece of it as well.

10 So I'm assuming HCD is looking at
11 this dynamic in that they have individuals
12 that have gotten just their electric bill
13 forgiven or just their water bill forgiven or
14 just their rental assistance forgiven. Maybe
15 there's a base to build off of individuals
16 who are already eligible, they meet the
17 income criteria, there's been verification
18 there, and maybe there only needs to be kind
19 of the validation piece for the utility.

20 BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

21 Q You know, I'd actually like to ask
22 Neil Singh from Pacific Gas & Electric
23 because I noticed specifically in their
24 reports that they addressed water arrearages
25 separately from energy arrearages and said we
26 will now turn to calling customers with water
27 arrearages, which jumped out to me for this
28 very reason that I would -- I -- they

1 describe them uniquely and separately?

2 I wonder if we wouldn't -- if we
3 could bring Mr. Singh back on and see if he
4 has perspective on this. I know PG&E did
5 request to update their numbers, so you
6 might -- you may also update your numbers at
7 this time, Mr. Singh.

8 WITNESS SINGH: Yes, absolutely. So
9 with the water customers -- so the ruling
10 captures 3 sets of customers referring 20
11 customers to the statewide portal, referring
12 15 outside of the data sharing agreement, and
13 then the largest piece, referring 5 customers
14 per LSP where the utility and the water
15 companies have customers in common.

16 We have coordinated with the water
17 utilities. Even though we have data sharing
18 in place, we asked them to provide the
19 arrearage information. So for that subset of
20 customers, we're calling customers with the
21 highest water arrearage.

22 Q Mr. Singh, is it your understanding
23 that then the customer could apply in one
24 fell swoop to relieve both their water and
25 energy arrearages through the application?

26 A Yes. So they're -- on the
27 application there's a page for water, there's
28 a page for electricity, and there's a page

1 for gas all in one application. It's my
2 understanding they would not have to submit
3 multiple obligations to get arrearage
4 forgiveness for the different commodities.

5 Q All right. Well, since you're
6 taking this tack and sort of a little bit
7 earlier on in the steps with the customers,
8 maybe you can make a point of following
9 through with the results for these customers
10 that you've identified with high water
11 arrearages and see if they're able to address
12 both utilities' arrearages at the same time
13 since you'll be tracking the small group.

14 A Absolutely. And as far as the
15 correction in data, for the first table, the
16 number of customers in the sample group,
17 PG&E's sample group should be 250 customers.
18 This consists of the 20 customers to the
19 statewide portal, 15, and then we have 43
20 unique LSPs. Five customers per LSP comes up
21 to 250.

22 The number of sample customers that
23 agreed to apply is 96. The number of sample
24 customers that have actually applied, as per
25 the customer verbally indicating so, is 5.
26 So far HCD has validated one of those
27 customers. As mentioned earlier, HCD will
28 send us the first batch of payments next

1 week. For the second table, we had validated
2 2,668 customers. For HCD specifically, this
3 totals \$2.6 million that we are expecting to
4 receive once they begin to issue check --
5 issue ACH payments to PG&E.

6 Also, PG&E has reached out to all
7 of the other cities and counties
8 administering ERAP in our service territory.
9 We've reached out to them three times. Some
10 of these cities and counties have not
11 expressed interest in working with PG&E to
12 validate arrears.

13 As I believe SCE mentioned earlier,
14 some of them are just going ahead with the
15 process issuing the check. When they issue
16 the check, PG&E, for cities and counties that
17 are not working with us, they issue the
18 check, it comes in as a regular customer
19 check.

20 For the other cities and counties
21 that are working with us, like SoCalGas has
22 mentioned, we have set up a different
23 P.O. Box so that they can send these checks
24 to and we can track them. So far from the
25 nonHCD cities and counties, we've received
26 payments totaling \$41,000, a little bit over
27 \$41,000 for 55 customers.

28 I believe you're on mute, your

1 Honor.

2 Q Thank you for those updates.

3 And, yes, thank you all the
4 witnesses. Let's take advantage of the
5 detailed experience they've shared with us
6 now and we will turn to party questions. I
7 see a few hands in the list. I see one from
8 Jamie Katz with the Leadership Counsel for
9 Justice and Accountability.

10 Please unmute yourself.

11 MR. KATZ: Thank you, your Honor. This
12 is Jamie Katz with the Leadership Counsel.

13 EXAMINATION

14 BY MR. KATZ:

15 Q I have a question specifically for
16 PG&E. I appreciate that PG&E has instituted
17 a de facto disconnection moratorium by
18 committing to not disconnect customers for
19 30 days after their COVID arrears have been
20 validated but before payment is received from
21 HCD or local governments.

22 My two related questions are I want
23 to confirm that PG&E plans to extend this
24 protection after June 30th. Also, given the
25 numerous technical and coordination barriers
26 that have been identified in today's hearing,
27 does PG&E intend to disconnect customers
28 whose COVID arrears have been validated but

1 payment has not been received from HCD or
2 local governments within 30 days?

3 WITNESS SINGH: Thank you. So as per
4 the first question, PG&E will protect
5 customer accounts after the protections, and
6 that is the intent as right now of course
7 everyone is protected. Would you mind
8 repeating the second part of that question.

9 Q Of course. Given that there have
10 been numerous technical and coordination
11 issues identified through today's hearing,
12 does PG&E intend that if payment has not been
13 received from HCD or local governments within
14 30 days after the arrears have been
15 validated, does PG&E intend to move forward
16 with the disconnection after those 30 days?

17 A Thanks. We've set up the 30-day
18 protection based on feedback from HCD. As
19 the payments start rolling in, if it's
20 determined that 30 days is not enough, we
21 will work with HCD to extend this window if
22 necessary so that we are giving both HCD and
23 the customer enough time to receive that
24 payment so that we're not turning anyone off
25 that is intending to receive a payment, an
26 ERAP payment.

27 MR. KATZ: Thank you so much.

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

1 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: To follow up
2 on that, Mr. Singh, I assume -- and
3 Mr. Katz -- the question is asking these are
4 customers who would have accepted or have
5 indicated that they want to participate in
6 the program, they just haven't gotten their
7 payments yet. You are not asking -- and I
8 guess I'm actually asking a clarification of
9 you, Mr. Katz. Thank you. You are not
10 talking about customers who could avail
11 themselves of the program but who have not;
12 is that correct?

13 MR. KATZ: Correct. My question was
14 targeted specifically at customers who were
15 willing to avail themselves, had been
16 validated, but payment had not yet been
17 received.

18 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Okay. Thank
19 you, sir.

20 Thank you, your Honor.

21 (ALJ Watts-Zagha's audio dropped.)

22 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: We have several
23 other -- (audio dropped.) I apologize. I am
24 having technical difficulties with the mute
25 button but it appears to be resolved.

26 I'd like to turn to parties in this
27 sequence now: Connie Cho, then we'll go to
28 Mad Stano, and finally Melissa Kasnitz.

1 That's our queue.

2 Please go ahead, Connie Cho.

3 EXAMINATION

4 BY MS. CHO:

5 Q Thank you. I actually want to pick
6 up on something that the SDG&E representative
7 said I believe. To the other utilities,
8 given the extremely low success rate in
9 distributing the ERAP funds to date, do you
10 feel also that it would be more streamlined
11 and effective to make a rules change or
12 provide some kind of direction to have the
13 stimulus money directly go to utilities since
14 you know who's in arrears and you can apply
15 that on behalf of the customers?

16 It sounds like it would cut out the
17 process of this intensive validation and
18 coordination with HCD or any other agency
19 that might be involved.

20 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: We'll ask Steve Rahon
21 then since you directed the question to
22 San Diego Gas & Electric; is that right?

23 MS. CHO: I believe it was something
24 that Steve Rahon had expressed and then --
25 and so I wanted to hear what the other
26 utilities actually thought of that.

27 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: I see. Okay.

28 How about Neil Singh with Pacific

1 Gas & Electric.

2 WITNESS SINGH: Sure thing. So we do
3 agree that it would be much easier if the
4 funding would go straight to the utility.
5 Something I would like to point out, as far
6 as the dispersion of ERAP funds, we can only
7 report out on the funding of cities and
8 counties that have agreed to work with us and
9 are interested in validating the arrears.

10 For example, in PG&E's service
11 territory, the majority of cities and
12 counties we reached out to were not
13 interested in validating arrears with PG&E so
14 they are sending checks on behalf of
15 customers to the normal P.O. Boxes.

16 These checks are -- these few
17 dollars are not identified as coming from
18 ERAP, so we're actually -- whatever it is, we
19 will continue to report on this second table.
20 The reality is that it's much greater because
21 there are various cities and counties that
22 are administering the program who have opted
23 not to partner with us.

24 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: To follow up
25 on Ms. Cho's question, however, going forward
26 to potentially having the State provide
27 funding for arrearage relief, that would not
28 be going through ERAP, so obviously there is

1 the current situation and looking back. But
2 looking forward, if there is a larger pool of
3 funds that do not specifically go through
4 ERAP, what would be a -- is there a more
5 efficient process that you can imagine?

6 WITNESS SINGH: I would say, number
7 one, the most efficient process would be
8 providing guidance to the utilities and then
9 having the utilities disseminate the funds
10 without third parties involved.

11 If that would not be a possibility,
12 I'm definitely a proponent of using CSD for
13 the fact that we already have data sharing
14 agreements set up, we have memorandums of
15 understanding, we have third-party security
16 reviews in place, and we also have our
17 pledging portal so that they already have
18 access to validate customer arrears via this
19 internet portal as opposed to reaching out
20 manually to the IOU on a weekly or otherwise
21 determined cadence.

22 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: This is ALJ
23 Watts-Zagha. I'd like to see if Southern
24 California Edison would like to add to this?

25 WITNESS AYUYAO: I believe that routing
26 the funds directly to the IOUs will really
27 make the process stream -- will really
28 streamline the process. I think it would be

1 so much better if we had like a batch
2 payment, like a batch submission of customers
3 with arrears. That would be the easiest way
4 to validate and, you know, record all of the
5 relief payments into our customers' accounts.

6 It's very similar to -- the way that
7 we were thinking about it is that maybe we
8 can adopt more of like a climate credit
9 approach where once the funds are applied in
10 the customer account, that we can reflect
11 those on a customer's bill and say that this
12 is a credit received from the relief of the
13 funds coming from the State.

14 Certainly there's a lot of things
15 that we probably need like an actual
16 resolution to make that happen. For what
17 PG&E has mentioned, if the money was directed
18 through CSD and if the funds will still have
19 to be case managed by the LSP, I think that
20 will also be a viable option.

21 But you're looking at the timeline
22 that it would take to process a payment or
23 apply these funds to a customer's account.
24 So in order to expedite the process and for
25 the customers to immediately get the relief,
26 you know, so routing the funds directly to
27 the IOUs might be a better approach.

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

1 Ivonne Meza, do you have additional
2 comments?

3 WITNESS MEZA: Yes. I wanted to
4 actually address Ms. Cho's comment about the
5 low success rate. I just wanted to say that
6 for our counties, we have over \$70,000 that's
7 going to be placed on customers' accounts
8 that we've already validated. We're just
9 waiting to receive the money.

10 From HCD, we have 1.6 million that
11 will hit customers' accounts per what they've
12 notified us. For the ALJ's outreach, we only
13 have \$10,000, a little under 10,000, but
14 that's because we've only been able to
15 validate the 17 customers through one data
16 exchange. We do believe that the other
17 customers that have applied we will see in
18 the subsequent data exchange.

19 To answer also Mr. Colbert's
20 comments about the -- how to best apply it, I
21 agree with PG&E and Edison's comments about a
22 climate credit or if it can be done a little
23 bit more direct, I think that will help as
24 well, more uniform across the customers.

25 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: And Steve Rahon, did
26 you also want to comment?

27 WITNESS RAHON: From what I had shared
28 earlier, I think the comments from the other

1 IOUs are consistent with that. I do think
2 that there's an opportunity here for a more
3 streamlined process so that we can get this
4 debt relief funding to our customers as
5 quickly as possible.

6 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

7 Mad Stano with Greenlining, your
8 question, please.

9 EXAMINATION

10 BY MX. STANO:

11 Q Thank you, your Honor. A question
12 for the panel, building off of the last
13 question actually and several threads
14 mentioned from the dais. Do you all think
15 there will be similar technical and
16 operational challenges, delays, complexities,
17 barriers to accessing funds for customers and
18 administrative burdens, as stated by all
19 representatives with ERAP implementation, if
20 new funding comes through CSD as written in
21 the May budget revise and budget change
22 proposal and do you have any recommendations
23 looking forward to mitigate some of those
24 potential challenges based on your
25 experiences with ERAP?

26 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're on mute.

27 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Mad Stano, I wanted
28 for my benefit and the benefit of many of us

1 here, if you could share what is written
2 specifically about how CSD would distribute
3 funds as currently planned so we could get
4 very specific about the challenges that are
5 particular to the plan, the tentative plan,
6 in place.

7 MX. STANO: Thank you very much, your
8 Honor. I will do my best with the caveat of
9 this proposal is in motion and this is my
10 personal best working understanding. But the
11 proposal as it's stated -- and I can drop a
12 link in the chat to the information we have
13 from the budget change proposal that offers a
14 little more detail from the governor's
15 proposal -- but we have a structure that
16 mimics ERAP with a third-party intermediary
17 being CSD, as opposed to HCD, where the funds
18 go to CSD for relief through the application
19 process that is stated to be a proposed
20 reform that is not specified to the LIHEAP
21 program and the individual applicant would be
22 the customers or ratepayers.

23 There is a -- similar to ERAP, there
24 is a focus on low-income customers. That's
25 the level of detail I'm understanding. And
26 I'm open if anyone wants to correct or add
27 any additional relevant information to that.]

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: This is ALJ

1 Watts-Zagha and I would like to add some
2 additional questions, because it is somewhat
3 speculative, and I do feel that we've heard a
4 few references to CS -- you know, CSD being
5 -- having some advantages as an
6 administrative body. I feel like we've
7 gotten pieces of answers to your question
8 already. So I would ask the next time that a
9 witness speaks that they could incorporate an
10 answer to your question. But I would like to
11 get another question in there as well.

12 And we do have next, I said Melissa
13 Kasnitz with Center for Accessible
14 Technology. And then on deck after that, we
15 have Ritta Merza with the Cal Advocates.

16 So, please, Melissa Kasnitz.

17 (No response.)

18 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: It may be that
19 Melissa Kasnitz is -- I see. I've gotten a
20 note that this party needs to be promoted
21 from attendee to panelist, in order to ask
22 the questions.

23 So I am going to notify our host,
24 Joseph Haga, if you could work on that.

25 MS. KASNITZ: Thank you. I have just
26 been promoted.

27 ///

28 ///

EXAMINATION

BY MS. KASNITZ:

Q I have perhaps it's a short array of questions, again, trying to help flesh out an understanding of how this could be, where the hurdles have been with the federal program and maybe where a state program could be more clear.

So, first the IOUs have mentioned that they worked to identify renters as potentially-eligible customers. But I know that is something that the IOUs in the past have said that they don't actually have information to do. So I was wondering first how the IOUs identified customers as likely renters. And then, while this -- the reports and program have focused on the rental assistance program, I know there's also a federal program that is meant to assist homeowners who are behind in their payments and I don't know how that works, so I was wondering if there have been similar challenges in implementing the mortgage assistance program and utility debt assistance combined with that, and if the state program is making a similar distinction between renters and owners and how we might do better on a state basis, than these two

1 separate federal programs that, you know, as
2 far as a customer's utility bill goes, it's
3 not necessarily clear whether it matters
4 whether they own their home or rent their
5 home and how those forms of assistance all
6 aggregate.

7 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Melissa Kasnitz, in
8 terms of the state program, I am guessing you
9 mean the forthcoming state program.

10 (Crosstalk.)

11 MS. KASNITZ: Yes, hopefully-to-exist
12 state program, yes. Thank you.

13 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: And I am sensitive to
14 just the moving target or the changes that
15 are evolving in that program, so I'm not
16 sure, you know, also in terms of the
17 knowledge of the witnesses before us, you
18 know, where they can go with that part of the
19 question.

20 MS. KASNITZ: Well, to see if the other
21 program maybe has been easier to administer
22 and might provide --

23 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Stop for a
24 second.

25 To the reporter, I cannot hear
26 Ms. Kasnitz or Judge Watts-Zagha
27 intermittently. Are you having the same
28 issue, Ms. Mendez? So were you able to get

1 that exchange at all or not really?

2 (Reporter response.)

3 ASSISTANT CHIEF COLBERT: Thank you.
4 Thank you, Ms. Mendez.

5 Your Honor and Ms. Kasnitz, you
6 broke up, but for me to intervene, this has
7 been going on for a while.

8 Again, Ms. Kasnitz, I think your
9 questions may be slightly broad into what
10 we're trying to address here, but I think
11 that may have been what Judge Watts-Zagha was
12 getting at. But is your microphone working
13 now, your Honor?

14 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: I hope my microphone
15 is working now. It must have migrated.

16 So let's ask Ms. Kasnitz to focus
17 the question then again, if you could, on the
18 current experience I think would be best.
19 And I know we are looking towards the next
20 program, but I do think our witnesses are
21 just best-equipped to answer questions about
22 the current experience.

23 BY MS. KASNITZ:

24 Q The most narrow question, thank
25 you, that would be helpful for me to
26 understand then is how the IOUs identified
27 the customers that they believe are renters
28 when they were targeting their outreach to

1 this program, because that's something I
2 understand they have struggled with in the
3 past.

4 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you. Okay.
5 SoCalGas, Ivonne Meza.

6 WITNESS MEZA: Hi. Yeah, for SoCalGas
7 you're right. We don't have the information
8 readily available to us. We kind of backed
9 into it to find our renters. So we offer a
10 program called a continuous service agreement
11 for property owners, that when a renter moves
12 out, then service goes on in the owner's
13 name, so that they can clean the property or
14 do whatever in between renters. So that's
15 what we did. We kind of backed into it that
16 way.

17 We don't have the capability to see
18 every renter in our service territory, but if
19 we had that continuous service agreement in
20 our customer information system, we
21 identified that that would be a way to see
22 renters.

23 Some of the customers we called
24 anyways, though, may not have met that, but
25 the ones that applied were people that said
26 that they were renters. So, yeah.

27 ///

28 ///

EXAMINATION

BY ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA:

Q And, Ivonne Meza, you know, I did want to follow up with Ms. Kasnitz' question about: Do you have any relief program for homeowners at this point that you're aware of?

WITNESS MEZA: The only one that I'm aware of right now is the Arrearage Management Plan, which doesn't take renters or homeowners into consideration, but we're also providing customers with that information when they indicate that they don't qualify possibly for emergency rental assistance.

Q And then Steve Rahon with San Diego Gas & Electric.

WITNESS RAHON: Thank you. Very similar response to SoCalGas.

We actually have the same type of program. We actually call it Revert to Owner. So it's a flag in our system that indicates that a property would revert back to the owner of the property. And so our assumption then is that that is a renter at that location. And so we use that as a proxy to identify renters. We don't have a clear flag in our system that knows which

1 properties are actual rental properties and
2 which ones are not.

3 Q Great. So Pacific Gas and
4 Electric.

5 WITNESS SINGH: So we do not know 100
6 percent who's a renter, but we do have
7 third-party information that identifies
8 customers as being a likely renter or not.
9 So we've been using the third-party data to
10 identify renters.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY MS. KASNITZ:

13 Q May I clarify, is that like the
14 Experian data that I know the utilities use
15 for various purposes?

16 WITNESS SINGH: I'm not sure who the
17 specific vendor is. It may be Experian. It
18 may be someone else.

19 Q But it's that type of third-party
20 data?

21 A Right.

22 Q Thank you.

23 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Then Eugene Ayuyao,
24 with Southern California Edison.

25 WITNESS AYUYAO: Similar with PG&E, we
26 use proxy data from a third-party and we have
27 used Axiom as the third-party information
28 from Axiom.

1 The other thing is we do have some
2 information from our energy savings
3 assistance program, where we have customers
4 who actually provide information if they're
5 renters, but it's not exhaustive, so we
6 needed to use additional information from a
7 third-party.

8 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you. Ritta
9 Merza, do you have a question?

10 MS. MERZA: Yes. Just briefly, Judge.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY MS. MERZA:

13 Q My question to the utilities is
14 whether there is a way to streamline
15 arrearage forgiveness from all utilities
16 services at the same time.

17 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Go ahead. Let's
18 start in the same order, with Ivonne Meza and
19 SoCalGas again.

20 WITNESS MEZA: I am going to have to
21 think about that or get back to you. I am
22 trying to think of how we could do that.

23 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Is there a witness
24 who would like to start in response to
25 Ms. Merza's question?

26 WITNESS RAHON: I will go ahead, your
27 Honor.

28 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Was that Steve Rahon

1 offering to respond?

2 WITNESS RAHON: Sure. I will respond
3 first.

4 I think it's a great idea if we
5 could actually coordinate across other
6 utilities to make it easier on our customers.
7 It's probably easier said than done.

8 There's certainly customer-privacy
9 issues, security issues, and so it's
10 something we'll take back and think about.
11 But from a customer perspective, good idea.
12 It might be really difficult to implement.

13 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Eugene Ayuyao, with
14 Southern California Edison, do you have a
15 response?

16 WITNESS AYUYAO: I think it's certainly
17 a great idea, but similar to what was
18 mentioned earlier, there's so many actors
19 that we have to consider about customer
20 privacy, consent for example. And without
21 knowing the processes and information from
22 the other utilities, I can't really say it's
23 feasible, but it's definitely a great idea
24 that we would like to consider.

25 WITNESS RAHON: And I believe I
26 understand the question now.

27 So, I would mirror what the other
28 IOU said, but from a customer's perspective

1 specifically with ERAP, they do have the
2 ability to enter themselves the different
3 arrearages they have for rents, water,
4 electricity, gas, and I believe other types
5 of fields may also be included as well.

6 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you. Would any
7 other witnesses like to respond? That's
8 fine.

9 I am not seeing additional questions
10 from the parties. And let me turn back to
11 the virtual dais.

12 I will note that the Commissioner
13 was unable to stick with us through this
14 point and had to leave for another meeting.
15 I do not hear a question from Assistant Chief
16 Colbert.

17 I would like to ask each utility
18 representative to make any concluding remarks
19 and then we'll adjourn.

20 I will begin with Southern
21 California Edison's representative David
22 Gomez.

23 STATEMENT OF MR. GOMEZ

24 Thank you, your Honor.

25 SCE appreciates the attention that
26 the Commission is paying to state and federal
27 funding issues and SCE agrees wholeheartedly
28 with the Commission and the other parties

1 concerning the importance of all state and
2 federal funding sources, as the country
3 continues to recover from the COVID-19
4 pandemic.

5 SCE is committed to doing the right
6 thing, helping customers in supporting
7 communities that we have the honor to serve.

8 ERAP and other similar programs
9 play an important role in these endeavors.
10 This is why SCE has and continues to conduct
11 outreach through direct calling and other
12 methods to ensure that customers are informed
13 about ERAP.

14 While no new programs are not
15 without their challenges, SCE reiterates it
16 has been expeditiously pushing to ensure that
17 ERAP and other funds are available to its
18 customers, both through HCD and through other
19 organizations.

20 Furthermore, SCE believes that the
21 utilities' experiences with this program can
22 provide useful guidance from the application
23 or management of potential future state
24 relief funds. Specifically, SCE believes
25 that not requiring individual enrollments for
26 a future state-funded forgiveness program
27 will allow for more rapid deployments of
28 relief funds, as well allowing all arrears

1 prior to June 30, 2021, to be eligible for
2 state-funded forgiveness.

3 Depending on how it is implemented,
4 this streamlined future process may help
5 avoid issues discussed today, including
6 issues related to outreach response rates,
7 application complexity and data sharing or
8 validation issues.

9 SCE looks forward to continuing to
10 work with the Commission on all of these
11 issues and looks forward to providing any
12 additional information requested by the
13 Commission concerning this program.

14 Additionally, as reflected during
15 Ms. Ayuyao's testimony, SCE will be providing
16 clarified and fully updated figures in its
17 next status report to alleviate any
18 uncertainty or confusion surrounding its
19 numbers at this time.

20 Thank you, your Honor. This
21 concludes my remarks.

22 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you, Mr. Gomez.
23 And after the other three representatives
24 speak, I will give some final guidance about
25 the weekly reports.

26 We'll turn next to Jennifer Reyes
27 Lagunero with Pacific Gas and Electric.

28 STATEMENT OF MS. REYES LAGUNERO

1 Good afternoon, again, your Honor.

2 PG&E remains committed to
3 supporting customers as they try to access
4 all available sources of financial
5 assistance. PG&E looks forward to continue
6 its outreach to its customers regarding the
7 ERAP program and other types of programs,
8 which includes via -- outreach via outbound
9 calls, leave behind direct mail and language
10 materials and partnering with community-based
11 organizations.

12 Also to minimize the risk of impact
13 to a customer's service, PG&E's customer
14 services are trained to offer customers
15 messaging about all applicable programs that
16 they may qualify for, such as AMP, CARE/FERA,
17 LIHEAP, ERAP and pay plans.

18 PG&E is grateful for this
19 opportunity to discuss the challenges with
20 the existing process that we've encountered
21 over the past few weeks, but we are
22 encouraged that we can remove any obstacles
23 that may prevent or discourage getting
24 much-needed relief to its customers.

25 Specifically, ideas of general
26 public service announcements or automatic
27 payments provided to the IOUs to apply to
28 customer arrearages as opposed to opt-in

1 programs are helpful.

2 PG&E also looks forward to
3 reestablishing its partnership with HCD, such
4 that we can continue a seamless process for
5 these ERAP payments.

6 Moving forward, PG&E hopes to use
7 lessons learned from today, like increasing
8 partnerships with cities and counties in
9 PG&E's territory, further opportunities for
10 streamlining and other ideas discussed from
11 today's hearing for increased success.

12 Thank you.

13 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you.

14 Laura Fulton with San Diego Gas &
15 Electric, please.

16 STATEMENT OF MS. FULTON

17 Good afternoon, your Honor, and
18 thank you.

19 SDG&E believes that accessing all
20 available federal and state relief programs
21 is essential for customers who have been
22 struggling during the pandemic and aiding
23 them as they try to alleviate any debt that
24 has accumulated during that time, and we
25 really appreciate the Commission's attention
26 and the opportunity to discuss our ideas and
27 experiences with the Emergency Rental
28 Assistance Program today.

1 SDG&E, as laid out in our earlier
2 testimony, recognized early on the importance
3 of the ERAP program for our customers and
4 worked to streamline and facilitate an
5 efficient process that ensured that customers
6 received relief as quickly as possible.

7 We also engaged in extensive
8 marketing, education and outreach efforts
9 aimed at addressing -- aimed at reaching as
10 many customers as possible and promoting
11 awareness of the program wherever
12 (inaudible).

13 Like any new program, there are
14 lessons learned that can be applied toward a
15 new funding that comes with the future, and
16 it's reassuring and we appreciate the
17 Commission's efforts to try to come up with
18 ways to streamline that process for
19 customers, and we really appreciate the
20 productive discussion that occurred this
21 afternoon.

22 SDG&E looks forward to ongoing
23 engagement with the Commission on these
24 issues and we will continue to update the
25 Commission with the ongoing efforts through
26 the ERAP program and updated numbers in our
27 weekly reporting.

28 Thank you.

1 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you,
2 Ms. Fulton.

3 And Shawane Lee with Southern
4 California Gas.

5 STATEMENT OF MS. LEE

6 Thank you, your Honor.

7 SoCalGas recognizes the substantial
8 financial hardships that many of its
9 customers have been enduring due to the
10 pandemic. That is why two days after your
11 Honor's ruling, SoCalGas began to implement
12 the requirements of the ruling. We felt it
13 was very important to help our customers
14 obtain arrearage relief. But even prior to
15 the ruling, SoCalGas had posted information
16 about ERAP and links to apply to SoCalGas'
17 social media and website on Twitter, Facebook
18 and Instagram. SoCalGas had already started
19 work with Option C providers, such as
20 Riverside City to verify arrears.

21 SoCalGas truly embraced the -- your
22 ruling, your Honor. Just three days after
23 the ruling, SoCalGas started calling the
24 sample pool of customers, and by May 24th, we
25 had made calls to 736 customers. From this
26 outreach, SoCalGas was able to achieve 51
27 customers who applied for ERAP. SoCalGas was
28 able to verify through the data exchange with

1 HCD that 17 of the 51 customers have
2 applications pending for grants, totalling
3 \$9,985 and the payments will begin posting
4 next week, according to HCD. We expect to
5 see the remaining 34 customers we reached
6 pursuant to our outreach will appear on HCD's
7 list during our next data exchange, but
8 importantly, SoCalGas helped its customers
9 overcome the barrier of completing the
10 complex 36-page application by providing
11 support, reviewing sample applications with
12 customers to help guide them how to apply.

13 SoCalGas also established a
14 relationship with local initiative support
15 corporation, who provided a telephone number
16 for SoCalGas customers applying for ERAP to
17 call for application support.

18 In addition to SoCalGas' outreach
19 to our customers, through -- pursuant to your
20 Honor's ruling, we leveraged our regional
21 public affairs group to contact cities and
22 counties administering their own programs in
23 order to develop a partnership to begin
24 verifying arrears, and as a result of this
25 outreach, SoCalGas has verified arrears for
26 customers who applied through Orange County,
27 Kern, Inland, City of Anaheim, Santa Barbara,
28 and the City of Riverside. We have been able

1 to verify arrears with the counties for a
2 total of 249 SoCalGas customers for grants
3 totalling \$75,500. And there is more to
4 come.

5 To date, SoCalGas has received
6 payments of \$30,781 for 135 customers and the
7 company is waiting for additional payments
8 from the counties, which we are receiving
9 through a special post office box established
10 for this purpose.

11 But separate to SoCalGas' outreach
12 to the counties, the company established a
13 relationship with HCD and developed a process
14 to conduct a data exchange.

15 HCD and SoCalGas cybersecurity
16 experts and analysts worked together to
17 develop a process so that effective May 17th,
18 the first data exchange took place, and as a
19 result of that data exchange, SoCalGas has
20 verified arrears for 2,963 customers who
21 applied through the state ERAP portal for a
22 total of \$435,538.00 in grants. And
23 beginning next week, SoCalGas will start to
24 receive payments for these grants, and there
25 is more to come.

26 HCD has confirmed they have
27 received grant applications from SoCalGas
28 customers of over \$1.6 million. SoCalGas is

1 excited to continue working with HCD on more
2 data exchanges to obtain this funding for our
3 customers.

4 As the Center for Accessible
5 Technology and the National Consumer Law
6 Center stated in their reply brief, quote,
7 "SoCalGas has demonstrated that it is taking
8 the ALJ's April 5th, 2021 ruling to leverage
9 federal funding very seriously." End quote.

10 We thank the Center for Accessible
11 Technology any National Consumer Law Center
12 for this observation. We do, and we are,
13 taking this very seriously.

14 It is our pleasure to do so, as we
15 know it is important to help our customers
16 who have arrears, the majority of whom are
17 low income, disadvantaged or vulnerable.
18 SoCalGas' goal is to help our customers
19 overcome their arrears and gain a better
20 footing to move forward and past the
21 financial difficulties they're facing as a
22 result of the pandemic.

23 And that concludes my remarks.
24 Your Honor, thank you.

25 ALJ WATTS-ZAGHA: Thank you Shawane Lee
26 and thank you to all the participants, the
27 parties and the utilities and the witnesses
28 for joining us and sharing your experience

1 here. I especially appreciate that you
2 brought witnesses with detailed knowledge of
3 this process and that was what made this
4 hearing so instructive today.

5 And regarding the weekly reports, as
6 you may recall, the idea was simply to get a
7 small group and follow those -- that small
8 group through the application process. So,
9 that is still the idea, and you are welcome
10 to simply report the numbers in those five or
11 six rows to the best of your ability for only
12 your sample group of customers, if you would
13 like. We began reporting any and all
14 customer progress because it did take time to
15 establish the sample group which we have a
16 better understanding of this today. But
17 going forward, if you would like to reduce
18 your reports to those types of numbers, I
19 think and until the process with those
20 customers is complete, as originally intended
21 in that ruling, you're welcome to do so.

22 I strongly encourage you, if there
23 is any additional clarifications in the
24 coming weeks, as you follow these customers
25 through, to communicate with Energy Division
26 and you do have that contact that you can
27 make with them.

28 And I also think this has been

1 extremely instructive with regard to general
2 customer outreach and the networks that you
3 work with.

4 That concludes today's hearing. And
5 we are off the record.

6 (Off the record.)

7 (Whereupon, at the hour of 2:41
8 p.m., this matter having concluded, the
Commission then adjourned.)]

9 * * * * *

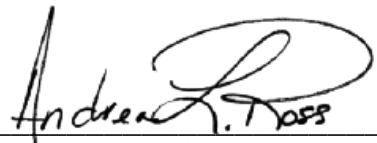
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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
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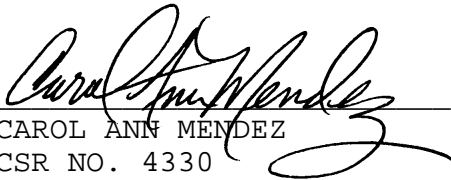
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CSR NO. 7896

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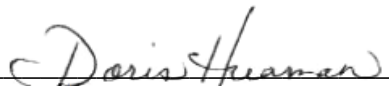
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DORIS HUAMAN
CSR NO. 10538

<hr/>	110 39:19,21	2021 39:25 72:1 84:15	43 131:19
\$	11:59 90:8	107:20 114:1,27 117:8	450 65:7,9 70:21
<hr/>	11th 89:16	154:1	46 83:24
\$1,000 88:7	12 44:28 45:9,17,21	209 68:6,13,22 74:22,25	<hr/>
\$1.6 128:16	120 85:21	21-02-014 91:14	5
\$10,000 116:24 120:8	12th 95:24 110:24	221 112:17	<hr/>
140:13	13 46:8	23 24:23 83:26	5 20:13 36:2 40:27
\$100 118:19	132 65:14 67:3,13	24 13:6	45:12,15 48:1 130:13
\$2 95:8	134 40:12,26 41:3 48:2	249 120:20,23	131:25
\$2,070,096 95:8	135 120:22	24th 66:11,17 69:4	500 100:26 119:25
\$2.6 132:3	13th 116:28	95:15,28 96:1,8 111:10	51 116:16,18 158:26
\$220 118:17	14th 117:14	112:16 158:24	159:1
\$25 39:23 122:6	15 109:18 130:12	25 14:20 18:11	55 24:22 25:2,10,21
\$3,000 101:12	131:19	250 131:17,21	132:27
\$31,000 120:22	17 116:19 118:5 140:15	25th 95:4 119:21	576 78:11
\$41,000 132:26,27	159:1	26 80:13 120:6	5th 64:23 107:4 108:3
\$435,000 119:25	17th 117:15	28th 16:10	<hr/>
\$450,000 119:28	180 68:9 98:13	29th 122:10	6
\$5.43 118:17	180,000 78:28 83:19	<hr/>	6 101:10,11
\$50 14:16 100:18 103:5	182 112:18	3	60 100:24 102:8
\$506 101:15	1:00 90:3,5,8 91:1	<hr/>	600 96:18 100:28
\$511,000 127:7,8	1st 39:24 107:20 114:26	3 130:10	102:10
\$70,000 140:6	117:7,8	3,300 65:2	62 107:24
\$76,000 120:21	<hr/>	30 31:7 81:3 85:21	688 96:4
\$800 88:8	2	133:19 134:2,14,16,20	69 101:6
\$9,985 116:24 159:3	2 67:11	154:1	6th 108:15 121:27
\$91,000 68:21	2,000 66:12 67:18	30,781 127:5	<hr/>
<hr/>	2,541 95:5,19	30-day 134:17	7
1	2,600 80:8 81:16	306 40:11	<hr/>
<hr/>	2,668 78:21 132:2	30th 89:12,13 133:24	7 47:22,26
1,600 65:8	2,693 119:23 120:6	31st 39:24 107:20	700 78:14
1-800 17:9	2,700 67:23	114:1,27 125:22	72 34:15
1.6 140:10	2,730 65:4 67:20	32 12:24 13:1,7 14:9,12	736 67:21 111:11
10 13:13 36:2	2,942 127:3	34 101:7 159:5	158:25
10,000 140:13	20 12:26 83:17,22 103:7	36 112:28 114:11	769 40:10
100 149:5	130:10 131:18	124:13	78 101:23
103 101:3,6	2020 39:24 72:1 84:15	36-page 159:10	79 70:18
10th 89:15 95:25	107:20 114:26 117:7	<hr/>	7th 108:5,9,27
11 20:12		4	<hr/>
		<hr/>	8
		41 20:15 24:20	<hr/>
			8 13:1,2 14:10

8,000 79:27	accurate 71:27 72:23 88:19	79:9 84:12 86:25 105:24 117:6 131:11 140:4 146:10	afternoon 91:1 93:8 106:27 155:1 156:17 157:21
8,900 78:20	accurately 95:12	addressed 51:27 129:24	age 21:20
80,000 100:15	Aceves 18:4 23:25 24:2 27:6 29:6 36:8,23, 28 38:1 47:5 51:7 76:16,19 89:5,24 104:21 123:21,27 124:10 127:21,22 128:12,26	addresses 71:25 72:16 92:8,20	aged 12:14
8th 109:9	ACH 132:5	addressing 125:9 157:9	agencies 22:14 44:19 64:25 77:15 103:9,12
<hr/> 9 <hr/>	achieve 158:26	adjourn 152:19	agency 44:6 102:21 136:18
9,540 107:22	acknowledge 104:23	adjust 74:4	aggregate 145:6
90 20:26 21:21 25:2,7 29:17 85:21	acknowledged 27:24	administer 145:21	agree 40:12,26 51:3 83:4,24 129:1 137:3 140:21
90-day 12:14	act 106:1	administered 77:12	agreed 13:2 48:3 65:13 67:12 101:7 109:19 112:17,19 116:14,18 117:13 120:17 131:23 137:8
93 110:24	action 17:3,7,18 19:6 23:13 38:18 43:19	administration 26:26 124:17	agreeing 67:16 113:11
96 12:15 78:11 131:23	active 22:7	administrative 78:2 91:12 104:3 141:18 143:6	agreement 79:25 130:12 147:10,19
9th 110:21,23 116:26	activities 52:1 64:9 93:18,20 98:4	administering 22:12 27:3 42:4 70:7 93:27 94:1 132:8 137:22 159:22	agreements 78:20 79:27 80:5 86:6 138:14
<hr/> A <hr/>	activity 23:20 66:9 84:3	administrator 27:14, 20	agrees 152:27
a.m. 90:8	actors 151:18	administrators 15:27 16:26	ahead 8:5 32:8 33:25 39:14 54:10 55:12 57:27 59:18 60:1 69:17 91:25 96:6 98:1 112:22 113:16 132:14 136:2 150:17,26
ability 152:2	actual 57:25 67:9 72:8, 15 74:20 82:17 108:8 121:10 139:15 149:1	adopt 105:11 139:8	aid 13:10
absolutely 14:25 19:4 78:4 81:10 82:27 130:8 131:14	adapt 105:10	adopted 51:8	aiding 156:22
accepted 83:6 135:4	adaptive 76:26 105:6	ads 79:14	aimed 157:9
access 52:4,15 70:2 78:7 109:24 138:18 155:3	add 17:26 28:18 38:16 44:21 59:19 99:15 102:4 138:24 142:26 143:1	advance 95:3	alert 108:23
Accessible 49:13 143:13	adding 38:19 44:18,25 72:27	advantage 103:24 133:4	ALJ 8:13,20 9:3,5,7,9, 11,27 10:8,12 14:4,25, 27 17:24 19:9 23:1,22 27:10 28:16,25 30:27 35:11 38:11 39:2 42:25 47:3,13 50:12 51:12 52:5,17 53:17,19 54:15, 26 55:2 56:2,20,25 57:26 58:17,23 59:14, 28 60:14,21 61:12,20 62:11,22 63:1,7,13,16, 18,20 64:5 68:26 77:23 80:12 84:17 89:26 90:2
accessing 141:17 156:19	addition 21:20 81:21 159:18	advantages 143:5	
account 23:20 71:21, 24 72:28 74:12 80:2,3, 6,17,19 81:1,2 84:10, 11,20 85:4 110:16 117:5,19,21,27 121:23 139:10,23	additional 17:11 38:26 40:7 44:22 47:4,6,24 55:18 69:7 89:2 124:18 126:20 140:1 142:27 143:2 150:6 152:9 154:12	advertising 19:7	
Accountability 133:9	address 19:1 20:28 21:5 38:14 48:17 52:13 53:27 58:7 72:27 77:19	advice 113:8	
accounts 11:5 23:16, 19 37:16 38:5 44:16,24 68:10 72:17,18 74:5,17 78:19,21 80:9 81:16 111:21 120:2 134:5 139:5 140:7,11		Advocates 55:10 143:15	
accumulated 71:27 156:24		affairs 122:15 159:21	
		affected 86:28	
		affidavit 76:23	
		affirm 78:5	
		affirmative 38:18 43:19	

91:10,16 104:18 106:21 115:7 120:13 123:25,28 126:1 128:21,22 129:20 134:28 135:21,22 136:20,27 138:22 139:28 140:25 141:6,27 142:28 143:18 145:7,13 146:14 147:4 148:2 149:23 150:8,17,23,28 151:13 152:6 154:22 156:13 158:1	apologize 25:4 58:3 135:23 appears 27:13 59:5 135:25 applicable 155:15 applicant 12:20 17:1 57:19 142:21 applicants 12:24 application 12:22 19:25 20:7 27:5 31:11 47:27 48:16 56:15,17, 19,21 57:25 58:19 59:24 65:18,22 67:8 82:24 84:23 88:1 112:28 113:2,5,22 119:9,15 124:12,24 125:11 129:1 130:25,27 131:1 142:18 153:22 154:7 159:10,17 applications 32:16 61:11 73:11 116:15 126:13 129:4 159:2,11 applied 13:3,10,19 23:17 24:9,10 40:27 41:4 59:22 66:21 71:22 74:17 75:15 81:15 83:5, 23 86:27 87:8,14,20 88:28 92:27 101:8 106:16 107:6,25 112:23 116:20 120:7 131:24 139:9 140:17 147:25 157:14 158:27 159:26 applies 17:1 18:8 27:25 87:23 126:7 apply 13:2 23:5,11 31:24,25 36:3 40:12,26 44:13,14 48:3 55:19 65:13 67:12,16 74:12 75:12 78:13 83:25 101:7 106:10 109:20 112:18,19 113:12 116:19 119:11 123:9,11 126:8 130:23 131:23 136:14 139:23 140:20 155:27 158:16 159:12 applying 27:27 31:19 66:20 82:23 128:23 159:16 appointments 116:11	appreciated 18:28 appreciates 152:25 approach 12:12 21:14, 26 30:23 40:17 57:3,15 100:5 105:6 106:5 139:9,27 approaches 76:26 appropriation 26:21 124:19 approved 97:2 approximately 65:7,8 April 10:23 31:15 39:24 64:23 84:15 89:12,13 94:23 96:14,20,24 97:1 98:5,26 107:4,20 108:3, 5,15 109:9 114:26 116:26,28 117:7 121:27 122:10 area 22:12 47:8 112:14 areas 47:9 arguably 128:1 armed 98:17 Armenian 115:20 arrangements 33:27 34:20,22 array 144:3 arrearage 11:28 15:22 18:19 32:15,19 33:17 34:9 72:18 74:17 93:14 100:7,17 107:25 114:9 130:19,21 131:3 137:27 148:9 150:15 158:14 arrearrages 10:27 14:12,13,20 15:15 29:17 30:2,6,15 31:9,22 32:19 45:13 48:15,18 77:20 78:27 80:1,2 81:18 84:14,19 85:14 86:9,25 87:18 105:21, 24 114:5,13,14,23 115:1 125:9 126:15 128:24 129:24,25,27 130:25 131:11,12 152:3 155:28 arrears 20:26 22:2 25:3 26:11,12 36:11 38:24 39:23 40:20 45:1,6,20	64:27 71:21,26 72:23 86:4 92:4,9,20 103:5 106:8,18 117:7 119:22 120:19,28 122:9 132:12 133:19,28 134:14 136:14 137:9,13 138:18 139:3 153:28 158:20 159:24,25 aspect 15:5 assessment 12:28 assign 109:14 assigned 14:18 29:27 assimilating 11:26 assist 93:13 98:22 112:2 115:21 144:19 assistance 9:15 10:17 11:15 19:24 31:11 32:14 37:3 53:1 64:10 78:8 79:17 98:8 106:19 108:2,17 118:22 119:20 120:10 122:1,11 123:12 129:8,14 144:18,24,25 145:5 148:15 150:3 155:5 156:28 Assistant 14:2,3,6,22 18:2,6 28:22 29:2 30:24 38:27 50:21,24,25 51:4 61:15,17 67:1,17,22,27 76:15 77:6,22 80:10 89:27 90:1 105:14 106:20 113:14,18 115:3 123:19 124:3,5,27 135:1,18 137:24 145:23 146:3 152:15 assisting 27:4 assume 37:5 58:27 114:22 135:2 assuming 60:11 129:10 assumption 148:25 attached 18:25 attempted 102:8,14 attempting 46:12 attendee 143:21 attention 152:25 156:25
--	--	--	---

attorneys 61:25 audio 22:10,25 135:21, 23 authentic 109:7 authorized 43:7 94:12 automatic 40:3 155:26 automatically 29:18, 19 33:20 74:4 avail 135:10,15 availability 31:24 37:3 availing 29:24 avenues 40:14 47:24 108:4 average 101:14,22 avoid 154:5 aware 22:22 32:13 37:15,17 74:7 99:26 108:11 114:22 122:25 148:6,9 awareness 157:11 Axiom 149:27,28 Ayuyao 62:5,9 63:16, 17,25 64:8,13 67:6,19, 26 68:2,27 77:21,25 91:5,20,25,26 138:25 149:23,25 151:13,16 Ayuyao's 154:15	122:5 125:20 balances 93:14 100:7, 17 118:16,18 119:5 Barbara 112:13 159:27 barrier 159:9 barriers 46:2 76:14 102:7 104:2 116:15 133:25 141:17 base 36:10 129:15 based 36:18 39:9 45:17 46:3,8 83:13 88:2,5 100:24 101:21 107:3,17 113:10 118:12 120:3 134:18 141:24 basically 14:19 basis 84:9 123:7 144:28 batch 131:28 139:1,2 Bear 8:7,9,27 9:12 13:5 35:27 51:16 52:19,21, 27 56:1 57:22 began 40:8 78:28 93:27 94:22 98:6,9,23 158:11 begin 10:15 42:15 43:4 132:4 152:20 159:3,23 beginning 9:21 20:2, 14 94:2 120:1 122:4 behalf 8:7,17 15:7,16 16:1 23:4 27:24 44:8 62:18 75:19 86:17 136:15 137:14 believes 22:19 153:20, 24 156:19 Ben 32:23 33:1 beneficial 50:27 benefit 18:24 19:19,20 117:12 141:28 benefited 24:4 benefits 98:28 Bernardino 13:24 112:11 best-equipped 146:21 big 41:8	bigger 45:8,25 biggest 46:14 bilingual 53:1 54:22,25 bill 32:14 37:27 44:1 81:23,24 82:1,10,21 84:26 85:9,13,27 86:20 87:2,3,15 99:17 129:12, 13 139:11 145:2 billing 20:27 21:3 32:4 bills 29:19 88:28 101:18 113:28 115:2 120:17 125:24,27 bit 12:25 16:12,14 58:26,28 109:22 120:24 125:15,18 131:6 132:26 140:23 body 143:6 Box 121:12 132:23 boxes 95:21 137:15 break 60:17,19 89:3 breakdown 102:1 briefly 59:1,4 60:25 150:10 bring 13:27 130:3 broad 146:9 broaden 47:25 broke 146:6 brought 22:7 bucket 85:17 buckets 85:21 budget 141:21 142:13 build 128:4 129:15 building 36:25 141:12 burdens 141:18 business 106:2 button 135:25	California 55:8 61:22, 23,28 62:3 63:21,25 64:7 72:11 91:20 106:25 138:24 149:24 151:14 152:21 158:4 call 17:8,15 32:20 37:6 40:24 41:23 42:18,19 46:21 48:20 53:7 57:3 61:25 65:4,8 78:25 85:15 98:18 100:26,28 102:11,18 108:12 109:6 110:15 111:21,23 112:8 113:3 115:20,24 118:3 122:2 123:14 148:21 159:17 called 8:23,25,27 9:1 40:9 42:21,23 46:22 63:21,23,25 64:1 67:20 69:1 78:11 79:1 83:25 101:1 109:6 111:14,15 112:6,8,10 116:7 147:10,23 calling 21:9 35:25,26 37:26 40:8 78:26 98:19 102:5 103:28 108:21 109:1,7,17 113:12 115:16 123:8,10 129:26 130:20 153:11 158:23 calls 35:23,28 51:16 52:19 53:9,12 54:23 58:13 59:8 64:18,22 65:19 67:9,10 78:15 83:2,15,19 98:22 109:10,11,13,18 110:3, 4,22 111:22 119:2 123:13 155:9 158:25 Calpeco 28:21 31:1 33:8 35:3,15 camera 49:17,22 campaign 102:5 103:28 campaigns 112:5 candidates 39:18,21 capabilities 73:26 capability 147:17 captures 130:10 care 12:13 31:7,21 32:4,17 36:7 37:22 38:8 64:26 107:14,22 121:25
<hr/> B <hr/>		<hr/> C <hr/>	
back 10:13,23 11:12 13:28 25:11 31:13 33:9 35:6,18 36:7 45:7,20,24 50:3 52:20 73:8 76:10 82:12,27 83:25 84:12 91:10 92:3,7 97:21,23 111:15 113:12 115:24 116:25 117:5,9 119:18 123:15 126:17 130:3 138:1 148:23 150:21 151:10 152:10 back-and-forth 9:22 backed 147:8,15 balance 79:7 88:9 117:25,26 118:9 121:2	back 10:13,23 11:12 13:28 25:11 31:13 33:9 35:6,18 36:7 45:7,20,24 50:3 52:20 73:8 76:10 82:12,27 83:25 84:12 91:10 92:3,7 97:21,23 111:15 113:12 115:24 116:25 117:5,9 119:18 123:15 126:17 130:3 138:1 148:23 150:21 151:10 152:10 back-and-forth 9:22 backed 147:8,15 balance 79:7 88:9 117:25,26 118:9 121:2	cadence 138:21 Cal 55:9 143:15	

CARE's 44:5,20 86:3	121:10,11,18 132:4,15, 16,18,19	148:27	29:6,14 36:8,23,28 38:1 47:5 51:6 60:27 76:16, 19 77:7,9 89:5,24 104:21 105:13,15 123:19,21,27 124:7,10, 28 125:6 127:21,22 128:12,26 152:12
CARE/FERA 155:16		click 111:8	
carry 46:27	checked 69:21	clicked 126:14	
carrying 125:20	checking 23:16	climate 79:17 87:14 139:8 140:22	
case 20:6 35:24 41:13 65:7,11 70:19 109:6 110:17 129:8 139:19	checks 38:4,7 43:26 68:19 73:28 132:23 137:14,16	close 103:27	Commissioner's 74:6
category 12:14,16 14:15 17:21 26:23	Chief 14:2,3,4,6,22 17:25 18:2,6 23:22 28:22,27 29:2 30:24 33:2 38:25,27 50:21,24, 25 51:4 60:27 61:15,18 67:1,17,22,27 76:15 77:6,22 80:10 89:27 90:1 105:14 106:20 113:14,18 115:3 123:19 124:3,5,27 135:1,18 137:24 145:23 146:3 152:15	closed 117:19	committed 78:6 153:5 155:2
Catherine 8:14	Cho 55:7,12,14 56:2 135:27 136:2,4,23	code 44:18 84:12	committing 133:18
Cathy 8:17	Cho's 137:25 140:4	Coincidentally 83:8	commodities 131:4
caught 46:11	choice 121:4	Colbert 14:2,3,4,6,22 17:25 18:2,6 23:22 28:22,27 29:2 30:24 33:3 38:25,27 50:21,24, 25 51:4 61:15 67:1,17, 22,27 76:15 77:6,22 80:10 89:28 90:1 105:14 106:20 113:14, 18 115:3 123:20 124:3, 5,27 135:1,18 137:24 145:23 146:3 152:16	common 47:22 48:9 130:15
caveat 142:8	choose 102:27	Colbert's 140:19	communicate 97:20, 23 109:5 111:19
CBOS 27:1 98:13	circulated 62:8	collaterals 79:11	communicated 13:16 114:10
center 22:18 41:23 49:13 78:25 98:18 109:6 111:19,20,21,24, 26 143:13	circumvent 108:25	colleagues 11:18 26:17,19 105:10	communicating 99:14,28
centers 85:16	cities 26:22 132:7,10, 16,20,25 137:7,11,21 156:8 159:21	collect 55:17	communication 77:1 81:21 82:17
cetera 85:22	city 84:12 99:3 122:12 158:20 159:27,28	collection 102:21	communications 54:18 99:10,21,28
challenge 85:26 86:8 104:5	clarification 38:15 61:4,13,16 67:2 68:17 91:21 92:11 118:4 135:8	collections 63:6	communities 153:7
challenges 77:14 83:16 85:24 92:6 104:14 141:16,24 142:4 144:23 153:15 155:19	clarified 154:16	collector 103:22	community 22:15 27:16 32:12 98:24
challenging 86:14	clarify 62:6 91:27 149:13	column 84:10	community-based 55:27 98:12 155:10
Chamber's 122:22	classes 12:19	combined 144:25	companies 61:26 130:15
chance 19:17 28:17	classification 44:18, 22,25	comfort 57:9	company 26:3 37:13 63:21,23,25 64:1 69:15, 18 106:25 123:24
change 79:18 136:11 141:21 142:13	classify 40:1	comfortable 96:27	company's 69:10
changed 112:25	clean 147:13	comment 140:4,26	comparing 86:3
channels 98:10	clear 14:17 85:22 106:8,15 109:15 118:21 124:7 144:8 145:3	comments 140:2,20, 21,28	complete 45:14 56:17 75:12
Charity 8:12,25 19:14 54:11		Commission 13:28 78:9 81:6 106:10 152:26,28 154:10,13 157:23,25	completed 57:19 89:11
chart 126:27		Commission's 156:25 157:17	completely 86:25
charts 126:28		Commissioner 11:18 14:18 17:25 18:3,4,18 23:23,25 24:2 27:6,11	completing 159:9
chat 123:23 126:3 142:12			complex 73:25 159:10
check 23:19 24:13 28:9 37:11,17 38:17 56:18 59:23 74:14,15,18 76:15 82:19 113:12			complexities 141:16

complexity 154:7	consists 131:18	56:23 72:7,10,22 80:15	74:27 76:27 77:5
complying 78:8	contact 9:14 15:12	84:20 89:20 92:13	Crosstalk 82:7 145:10
computer 41:27 116:2	16:25 17:6 20:5,18	95:24,26 96:15 97:22,	CS 143:4
concern 16:22 50:23	21:10,15 22:10,20	25 113:23 114:5,6,15	CSD 86:5 138:12
75:22	27:22 28:3,6,9 32:23,	135:12,13 142:26	139:18 141:20 142:2,
concerned 16:16	25,28 34:24 35:1,14	corrected 92:23	17,18 143:4
concerns 104:9 117:10	37:25 39:6 40:5 42:16	correction 69:8,19	curiosity 85:7
122:19	50:2 59:8 83:18,22,27	82:28 131:15	curious 34:5 55:15
conclude 28:18 60:2	102:9,14 111:23,26	corrections 64:11	71:14 72:10 82:13
93:19 99:27	122:3 159:21	correctly 24:6 89:7	current 29:23 77:8
concludes 154:21	contacted 14:9 67:25	111:1 121:23	101:17 117:22 124:21
concluding 152:18	contacts 22:23	correspond 80:6	138:1 146:18,22
conclusion 82:25	contemplate 124:18	council 98:24	customer 13:18,19
conduct 43:7 52:10	continue 41:2,11,15,18	counsel 8:14 41:21,28	15:7,14,17,22 16:1,4,
153:10	44:23 45:22 46:21 97:5	133:8,12	16,19 17:9 21:18 23:5
conducted 43:14 52:1,	119:15 123:6 127:14	counsels 56:7	24:10 27:25 31:16 32:3,
13 53:26	137:19 155:5 156:4	count 24:21	17 34:11,24 35:2,14,23
confer 126:16	157:24	counties 26:22 107:7	36:7,9 37:2,14,21,25
confess 68:27	continued 13:8 89:16	112:9 120:9,12,19,25	38:7 41:3 44:1,11,15
confirm 38:23 41:3	continues 153:3,10	121:6 125:13 132:7,10,	48:13 54:22,25 61:9
71:26 76:9,10 78:12	continuing 48:25	16,20,25 137:8,12,21	62:20 70:21 71:1,7,24
83:5 114:13,17 116:23	91:13 99:19 154:9	140:6 156:8 159:22	72:19 73:23 74:1,5
133:23	continuous 105:6	country 153:2	75:5,20,23 76:23 78:21
confirmation 43:4	147:10,19	county 13:24 22:17,18	79:5,25 80:3,9 81:1
confirmed 13:3 30:16	contractor 26:27	70:16 112:10,12 120:11	82:9,14,21 83:3,5,6
40:27 61:10 65:21	contractors 79:13	121:17 122:13,27	84:13,20,23,28 85:7,13,
66:23 67:7 75:15	control 49:21	125:13 159:26	23,26 86:15,18,23,26
116:19	conversation 15:2	couple 109:17 113:6	87:6,7,17,21,22,27
confirming 59:21 84:7	87:28	122:26 125:3	88:2,5,7,10,15,20,28
conflict 60:8	conversations 29:27	court 19:19 22:28	92:4,9,20 94:6,27 96:25
confusion 80:7 154:18	35:3,15 118:25,26	cover 125:28	97:9,11,15 98:8,27
connect 32:26 41:17	120:3	covered 45:19 49:24	99:9,18 100:13 101:15
connected 47:10	convince 119:10,16	88:8 109:28	104:7,9,11 106:1,4
connection 46:19 47:9	coordinate 128:8	COVID 78:28 85:6	109:19 110:9 111:18,
Connie 55:7 135:27	151:5	93:14 98:8 101:23	20,22,23,26 113:4
136:2	coordinated 130:16	133:19,28	114:19,27 115:19,22
consent 151:20	coordinating 48:7	COVID-19 153:3	116:11 117:25 122:10
consideration 148:11	coordination 48:6	create 84:6	126:7 130:23 131:25
consistent 27:12	133:25 134:10 136:18	credit 63:5 85:19 87:14,	132:18 134:5,23 138:18
29:28 83:21 104:7	Coronavirus 45:10	15 139:8,12 140:22	139:10 147:20 151:11,
141:1	corporation 116:8	credited 81:28	19 155:13,28
	159:15	criteria 47:23 57:11	customer's 19:25
	correct 14:11,21 21:23	107:23 129:17	23:3,9 27:24 74:12
	24:15 25:9,26 26:11,13	critical 47:11 55:21	139:11,23 145:2 151:28
	29:9,10 30:3,4,7,8		155:13
			customer-privacy
			151:8
			customers 9:13 10:18,
			20,25,26 11:3,7,10
			12:13,16,27 13:1,14,27
			14:10 15:3 16:11 20:1,

2,4,10,12,13,15,21,23, 24,25 21:1,9,22,24,28 22:5,6,7,15 23:11,14,15 24:7,18,20,21,23,24,26 25:2,5,6,7,13,21 26:1,2, 9,10,12 27:2,4 30:13 31:7,8,13,17,21,27 32:20 33:4,7,22,24 34:7 35:21 36:1,2,10 37:23 38:5 39:20,22,26 40:2, 9,11,12,20 41:7,16,19 42:12,13 44:9,13 45:2, 12,15,26 46:6,11,13,22 47:22,26 48:8 51:17 52:2,8 53:22,27 54:24 55:18 56:16,18 58:5,7 59:6,21 64:26,28 65:2, 5,7,9,13,14,15,21,24,26 66:12,13,19,23,26 67:3, 7,10,12,13,15,21 68:3, 5,7,8,9,13,15 69:1 71:8, 9,22 74:9,22,25 75:1, 10,11,14,25 76:5,8,11 77:19 78:6,11,12,27,28 79:9,13,21 80:8,13,16, 18 81:14,16,17 82:22 83:15,18,23,24 84:24 93:13 95:6,18,21 96:3 97:3 98:15,19,22 99:4, 10,14,25 100:7,9,16,17, 21,24,26,27 101:1,3,7, 8,9,10,11,13,17,21,28 102:8,10,13,17,23,28 103:8,10,15,17,19 104:1 105:21 106:7,18 107:5,12,14,16,22,24 108:1,2,5,6,12,18,21 109:3,6,17,20,23 110:2, 3,6,25,28 111:4,11,28 112:14,17,19,22 113:1, 11,24 114:4 115:13 116:1,10,14,16,17 117:19 118:5,8,10,18, 20,26 119:1,2,16,23 120:6,7,16,20,23,27 121:26 122:5,24 123:8, 13 125:9,12,18,23 126:17 127:2,3,4,19 128:3,5 129:26 130:9, 10,11,13,15,20 131:7,9, 16,17,18,20,22,24,27 132:2,27 133:18,27 135:4,10,14 136:15 137:15 139:2,25 140:15,17,24 141:4,17 142:22,24 144:11,15	146:27 147:23 148:12 149:8 150:3 151:6 153:6,12,18 155:3,6,14, 24 156:21 157:3,5,10, 19 158:9,13,24,25,27 159:1,5,8,12,16,19,26 customers' 38:24 74:16 114:22 129:4 139:5 140:7,11 cut 22:26 136:16 cuts 125:21 cybersecurity 117:10 <hr/> D <hr/> daily 123:15 dais 104:20 141:14 152:11 Dan 8:10,23 54:7 data 21:27 22:3 24:24, 25 25:5 61:7,9 70:25,28 71:13,16 72:2,9,12 74:1 78:10 84:5,6,8 86:5 92:6,13 94:18 97:8,9, 11,16,18,22,25 103:11 116:20 117:11,15,18 130:12,17 131:15 138:13 140:15,18 149:9,14,20,26 154:7 158:28 159:7 date 20:8,10 31:14,27 36:4 40:9,25 45:20 54:20 64:9 65:24 66:7 67:20 68:14 78:19 91:28 120:22 136:9 dates 81:22 David 62:1,3 152:21 day 83:8 89:15 108:15 110:20 days 20:26 21:21 25:3, 8 29:17 43:15 81:3,17 85:21 89:9 95:4 133:19 134:2,14,16,20 158:10, 22 de 133:17 deal 46:7 dealing 26:20 77:16	debit 101:23 103:3 113:27 114:4 debt 14:15 21:19,20,22, 25 23:3,9 25:8,12,13 26:1 33:5 76:24 78:10 85:17,21 101:22 102:28 103:1,2,22 107:18 118:6 129:5 141:4 144:24 156:23 decision 33:18 deck 143:14 declining 115:23 defrayed 87:9 Del 22:17,18 delays 141:16 delinquencies 45:16 departing 36:17 department 27:16 38:8 85:19 Depending 154:3 deployments 153:27 describe 130:1 desk 17:10 detail 142:14,25 detailed 133:5 details 33:11 87:26 117:22 determination 67:9 determine 12:18 30:22 32:4 58:10 85:12,13 determined 65:20 84:22 134:20 138:21 develop 19:8 48:25 159:23 developed 94:15 108:6 109:2 110:26 Development 27:16 dialer 40:3 41:9 dialing 40:11 Diego 61:23 62:15,18 64:1 91:23 93:5 99:3 104:24,27 105:8 127:26 136:22 148:16 156:14	difference 79:24 104:23 112:20,21 differences 66:1 69:21 difficult 45:27 88:10,14 109:22 112:27 125:18 151:12 difficulties 135:24 direct 17:10 20:5 33:23 34:4,10,14 58:7 59:8 111:17 118:25 140:23 153:11 155:9 direct-target 40:5 directed 50:5 78:23 136:21 139:17 directing 42:11 direction 27:18 50:8,28 106:9,15 136:12 directly 16:5,19 17:16 21:1 23:17 26:21 27:19, 27 31:10 34:17,19 36:12 40:28 42:6,24 54:24 57:5 106:6 107:6 111:8 112:1 114:10 120:7 136:13 138:26 139:26 director 41:23 62:20 disconnect 33:22 34:16,21 133:18,27 disconnecting 33:7 disconnection 30:5,7 33:24 81:2 133:17 134:16 disconnections 33:28 34:19 discourage 155:23 discrete 42:27 43:6 discretion 121:4 discuss 30:21 66:26 109:3 117:2 155:19 156:26 discussed 27:21 43:24 77:13 154:5 156:10 discussing 70:24 108:4 discussion 157:20
--	---	---	---

discussions 84:21 92:2 94:3 104:26 117:27 120:15	e-newsletter 122:23	eligibility 37:7 40:4	ensured 157:5
dispersion 137:6	eager 58:23	eligible 65:2 66:14,15 88:16 89:12 103:25 107:12 118:11 128:9 129:16 154:1	ensuring 94:6 117:11
disseminate 138:9	earlier 27:21 83:19 91:22 92:24 111:12 124:13 131:7,27 132:13 140:28 151:18 157:1	embraced 158:21	enter 118:8 125:25 152:2
distinction 144:26	early 66:24 93:25 94:3 98:5 104:25 157:2	emergency 9:15 10:17 11:14 19:24 64:9 99:9 108:16 122:1 148:14 156:27	entered 125:19
distribute 142:2	easier 137:3 145:21 151:6,7	employees 109:14	entire 52:28 57:6
distributed 95:2	easiest 139:3	encountered 155:20	entities 42:7 46:17 73:15,17,27 74:2,27 77:15
distributing 46:18 47:1 136:9	easily 38:22	encourage 39:5 103:23	entity 27:22 44:8 47:1 74:21
distribution 98:25	easy 39:8	encouraged 44:12 155:22	Environmental 55:8
divide 64:16	echo 10:9	end 13:17 37:16 38:3 99:8,18 115:27 125:22	envision 125:7
Division 32:23,26 39:7 69:26 70:3	Edison 61:22,23 62:1,4 63:25 64:7 72:12 91:20 138:24 149:24 151:14	endeavors 153:9	equate 78:20
document 9:17,20,24 62:7	Edison's 140:21 152:21	ended 30:6 65:4 100:28 115:23	ERAP 11:23 22:10,13 26:5 32:13 37:23 40:23 42:4 44:2,7,26 45:10,13 46:4,15 54:2 55:19 56:21 58:19 59:7 64:15 77:28 78:13,23,24 79:2, 5,11,15,19 82:5,17 83:20 85:24 86:1,2,3,8, 9,22,27,28 87:7,19 88:3,8,15,16 93:26,27 94:12,22,27 95:5,6,11 97:2,5 98:6,14,28 99:5, 12,19,22 100:2 103:20, 24 105:28 108:10 112:19 121:14 132:8 134:26 136:9 137:6,18, 28 138:4 141:19,25 142:16,23 152:1 153:8, 13,17 155:7,17 156:5 157:3,26 158:16,27 159:16
documentation 113:21	education 93:18 98:3 157:8	ends 33:5 37:12	ERAP-SPECIFIC 82:20
documents 113:9,19	effective 36:6 55:22 59:6 136:11	enduring 158:9	error 42:1
dollar 45:9 82:4 85:2	effectively 30:13	energy 32:23,26 39:7 69:25 70:2 98:17 129:25 130:25 150:2	ESA 79:12,13
dollars 21:25 127:19 137:17	efficient 125:8 138:5,7 157:5	engage 17:13 34:8 41:17 102:23	essential 156:21
door 34:22,23,25	effort 79:1 109:16 112:18	engaged 157:7	essentially 105:20
Doris 9:27	efforts 26:15 157:8,17, 25	engagement 42:14 64:20 70:23 157:23	establish 50:9 94:4,9
drives 98:25	electric 8:3,7,27 10:4 28:21 31:1 33:8 59:16 61:22,24 62:16,19,24, 26 63:23 64:1 77:27 80:2,4 91:23 93:6 129:12,22 136:22 137:1 148:17 149:4 154:27 156:15	English 52:3,9 53:2,6, 13,22,26 54:3,5,14,21 115:17	established 15:9 42:14 50:2 75:26 76:2 121:11 159:13
drop 142:11	electricity 130:28 152:4	enhanced 124:22	estimate 80:26
dropped 22:10,25 135:21,23	electronic 25:24 43:27 49:3,4 121:19	enroll 21:2 40:6 99:4 118:11	
due 11:25 37:27 79:7 84:25 85:8 87:1 93:14 102:17 158:9	electronically 74:3	enrolled 20:27	
dynamic 129:11	element 16:22 47:11 57:12	enrolling 118:15	
<hr/> E <hr/>		enrollment 72:20	
e-mail 20:17,18,22,28 21:1,5,11 31:10,23 32:27 36:5,13 52:4,15 53:27 54:20 58:7 59:5, 10,11 79:6,9 103:18,28 111:3,7		enrollments 153:25	
e-mailed 111:7		ensure 20:20 104:6,10 106:3,15 153:12,16	
e-mails 25:25 31:16			

Eugene 62:5 63:16,25 64:7 77:25 91:5,20 149:23 151:13	expedite 74:28 139:24	federal 93:12 144:6,19 145:1 152:26 153:2 156:20	flag 148:22,28
event 48:17 99:1,3,6	expeditiously 75:6 95:12 97:6 153:16	feedback 13:27 16:15, 23 19:5 55:17 118:27 134:18	flesh 144:4
events 17:17 98:24,26	Experian 149:14,17	feel 11:15 17:27 66:25 95:8 97:4 112:25 136:10 143:3,6	flier 20:19 25:26 26:7,8
evolving 145:15	experience 11:14 19:23 39:9 46:3 48:22 73:18 74:20 77:28 78:1 81:13 115:12 126:22 133:5 146:18,22	fell 12:18 130:24	flyer 58:8
EXAMINATION 10:11 14:5,26 24:1 27:9 29:1 30:26 36:22 39:1 49:25 51:22 52:16 55:13 56:12 64:4 89:4 91:15 113:17 115:6 133:13 136:3 141:9 144:1 148:1 149:11 150:11	experiences 88:26 141:25 153:21 156:27	felt 94:8 119:8 158:12	focus 12:13 25:12 55:24 95:21 127:17 142:24 146:16
Excel 73:28	explain 42:2 71:18	fields 152:5	focused 144:17
excellent 62:11 127:23	explaining 110:28	figure 15:15	folks 25:19 37:6 52:14
exception 51:26 52:12 97:19,24	express 67:13	figured 21:10	follow 16:9 17:2 72:5 123:10 127:24 135:1 137:24 148:4
excess 78:14	expressed 65:15 132:11 136:24	figures 154:16	follow-up 15:23 38:2 43:13 47:28 48:2 52:27 55:17,25 57:5,13 65:19 67:10 92:12 103:15,18
exchange 47:19 50:11 61:7,9 70:25,28 71:13 72:11 84:26 94:5 103:11 107:13,21 112:7 116:21 117:15 140:16, 18 146:1 158:28 159:7	extend 133:23 134:21	file 20:28 21:6 53:28 64:24 83:9 89:14,22 92:15 104:7	follow-ups 58:5 119:7 124:4
exchanged 71:17 92:13 97:8	extensive 157:7	file-transfer 70:27	forgiven 129:13,14
exchanging 94:11 104:13	extent 50:6 56:26 72:2	filed 12:1 80:22	forgiveness 128:7 131:4 150:15 153:26 154:2
Excluding 68:4 69:2	extremely 49:28 136:8	files 89:13,17 94:27 96:25 97:15,16	forgot 126:27 128:14
excuse 14:2 34:26 35:7 113:14	<hr/> F <hr/>	filing 33:15	format 55:3 74:3,24
excused 60:10,15	face 30:7	filings 34:6	formats 73:28
exhaustive 150:5	Facebook 108:20 121:28 158:17	fill 32:16	forms 145:5
existed 104:9	faced 83:16	filled 119:13	forthcoming 145:9
existing 64:27 86:5,7 128:5 155:20	facilitate 15:28 27:28 50:11 157:4	filling 31:11	fortune 26:19
expanded 47:23	facilitating 17:21	filter 117:17	forum 60:28
expect 45:12 70:9 81:19 102:18 159:4	facing 33:24	final 16:14 59:17 154:24	forum 60:28
expected 100:25	fact 30:2 61:8 103:25 127:27 138:13	finally 135:28	forward 18:17,27 29:13 38:15 41:1,7 46:28 48:26 50:26 51:5 57:15 76:3 97:6 104:17 123:5 125:5,7 134:15 137:25 138:2 141:23 154:9,11 155:5 156:2,6 157:22
expecting 27:19 28:2 62:12 75:17 81:15 132:3	facto 133:17	financial 78:7 79:16 98:20 155:4 158:8	found 94:3
	fairly 59:26	financially 40:21	fourth 8:4
	fall 17:21	find 10:26 15:28 21:7 40:7,22 44:13 59:26 66:19 75:23 85:8 147:9	frame 42:26 71:28 72:24
	familiar 12:1 37:4 57:22	fine 12:11 51:10 73:6 96:5 152:8	free 11:15 17:27 66:26
	fashion 102:25 106:12	fine-tune 110:26	Fresno 112:12
	feasible 151:23	finishing 57:24	Friday 116:27
	February 93:24 107:26		

friendly 125:16	giving 19:17 57:7 134:22	guard 46:11	84:5,6,9,19,22 86:17 88:17 89:9,10,21 92:1, 3,13,17 93:27 104:26 105:1 107:5,6,19 114:17,26 116:21,22, 25,26 117:23 119:22 120:7 121:1,18 124:12 127:25 128:9,13 129:10 131:26,27 132:2 133:21 134:1,13,18,21,22 136:18 140:10 142:17 153:18 156:3 159:1,4
front 101:20	glad 47:9 56:27	guess 30:9 34:12 50:7, 15 76:22 87:1 135:8	HCD's 80:26 118:1 120:3 159:6
full 44:28 45:9 129:7	glance 107:23	guessing 145:8	head 35:10 48:10 51:11 74:6
fully 78:8 154:16	goal 45:8 86:24	guidance 138:8 153:22 154:24	HEAP 13:23 15:19 17:11
Fulton 62:15,17,18 93:4 156:14,16 158:2	goals 107:8	guide 159:12	hear 10:9 15:11 19:15 39:16 42:6 124:14 136:25 145:25 152:15
fund 44:20	Gomez 62:1,2,3 152:22,23 154:22	guidelines 120:24	heard 9:12 24:5 31:13, 27 75:7 91:17 105:17 112:3 116:1 143:3
fundamental 77:1	good 8:6,16 11:17 17:23 27:22 38:2 39:20 46:19,25 48:21 50:19 57:2 62:9,17,25 63:3 93:8 104:16 105:4,27 106:27 126:19 151:11 155:1 156:17	Guzman 18:4 23:25 24:2 27:6 29:6 36:8,23, 28 38:1 47:5 51:6 76:16,19 89:5,24 104:21 123:21,27 124:10 127:21,22 128:12,26	hearing 10:3 19:2 34:27 35:8 89:27 91:14 95:3 133:26 134:11 156:11
funding 10:17,25 26:23 27:22 29:21,23 31:12, 24 45:26 77:18 86:3,4 93:13 124:21 125:6 137:4,7,27 141:4,20 152:27 153:2 157:15	governments 133:21 134:2,13	<hr/> H <hr/>	held 98:26 116:5
funds 18:19 27:3 29:16 40:4,15,18 44:5,7,24 45:5 47:2 68:24 120:17 136:9 137:6 138:3,9,26 139:9,13,18,23,26 141:17 142:3,17 153:17,24,28	governor's 142:14	Haga 49:20 53:17 58:1 143:24	helped 159:8
future 46:28 70:2 80:6 117:26 153:23,26 154:4 157:15	grants 159:2	half 15:9	helpful 10:5 36:14 44:10 49:18 51:3 53:14, 23 69:24 76:20 77:20 81:9 88:13 93:2 101:26 104:26 115:11 146:25 156:1
<hr/> G <hr/>	grateful 119:3 155:18	hand 49:3,8,11,15 51:21	helping 22:15 27:4 65:10 120:16 153:6
gas 8:4,14,18 9:1 10:1 39:13 41:21 46:6 47:7 50:1,16,17 51:26 52:12 61:22,24 62:15,18,24, 26 63:21,23 64:1 77:26 80:1,4 91:23 93:6 106:25 123:24 128:7 129:22 131:1 136:22 137:1 148:17 149:3 152:4 154:27 156:14 158:4	great 11:19 14:28 22:16,21 25:18 27:17 42:26 45:24 46:7 48:12 55:2 56:26 63:1,13 86:16 149:3 151:4,17, 23	hands 49:4 126:25 133:7	Hey 46:23 85:4 117:25
Gas' 42:3	greater 12:14 14:15 20:26 21:21 25:13 29:15 100:17 122:22 137:20	hanger 34:25	high 10:26 22:1 110:2 131:10
gave 95:23 109:21 117:19,21	greater-than-90-day 14:15	hangers 34:22,23	high-level 81:8 127:17
general 18:20 85:27 100:18 155:25	Greenlining 51:19 141:7	happen 33:4 66:9 139:16	higher 25:12 105:8,16
generally 64:8 76:14	ground 37:14	happened 11:1 96:28	highest 31:8 102:28 128:2 130:21
Gibson 8:5,6,7 32:24 59:16 60:1,4,20	group 10:27 11:1,3,9 12:16 13:4,14 16:21 24:22,26 36:2 40:6 52:28 57:4,16 58:27 61:24 65:27 66:5,9,20 68:4 69:2 75:16 78:1 83:3 84:2 93:20 99:24, 26 100:5,23 101:4,6,9 103:7,13 109:7 131:13, 16,17 159:21	happening 83:20	highlight 96:9 99:11
give 9:23 10:18 18:21 27:21 31:3 92:7 154:24	groups 55:24	happy 12:7 17:15 37:20	highlighted 95:21
		hard 41:26 85:27 110:27	
		hardship 98:21	
		hardships 158:8	
		HCD 12:2 24:14 31:28 37:11,18 38:6,21 41:1 42:13,17 46:26 47:10 64:20 70:23,28 71:17, 20 72:4,6,12 73:10 74:21 75:25,27 76:3,5, 11,21 77:1,9 78:18 80:1,20 81:21 83:4,12	

Hispanic 122:22		in-house 94:16	101:19 104:11,13
hit 39:21 140:11		in-language 52:6,11, 22	107:17 108:11,13,16, 19,28 110:8,10,11 111:7 113:10 116:22 117:3 122:2 126:28 127:17 130:19 142:12, 27 144:14 147:7,20 148:13 149:7,27 150:2, 4,6 151:21 154:12 158:15
holder 114:12	idea 84:1 126:16,19 151:4,11,17,23	inaudible 39:13 54:4 157:12	informative 124:20
holds 45:23	ideal 11:8	include 25:26 26:4,8 68:22 78:24 79:16	informed 153:12
home 34:16 116:2 145:4,5	ideally 38:21 49:3 55:3	included 26:3 68:14,23 152:5	initial 12:27 13:11 21:26 24:22 50:3 60:11 65:1 88:1,6 96:25 113:3 119:2
homeowners 144:20 148:6,11	ideas 155:25 156:10,26	includes 20:17 155:8	initially 20:11 21:11,23 24:21 34:13 83:1 112:17
homes 79:12	identified 12:15 22:11 24:11,19,22,25 31:7 39:18,22,25 40:14 64:25,28 79:10 100:6, 10,14,16 103:9 107:21, 28 131:10 133:26 134:11 137:17 144:15 146:26 147:21	including 50:9 98:28 154:5	initiative 85:18 116:7,8 159:14
honed 55:5	identifies 149:7	income 15:20 25:8 36:11 129:17	Inland 68:7,12,23 70:17 74:23 112:13 159:27
honest 126:10	identify 46:12 47:22 53:21 66:12 97:25 100:20 101:3 104:4 107:11 115:9 144:10 148:27 149:10	income-qualified 62:28	input 126:15
honor 8:6,17 11:18 14:3,24 28:23,24 30:25 31:2 38:28 39:15 47:20 49:24 50:21,24 51:2,24 55:1 60:4,13,20,25 61:16 62:2,10,17,26 63:3 64:13 66:10,22 67:1 68:1 70:5 71:19 73:5 76:9 77:7 91:26 92:10,14 93:9 97:7 124:6 133:1,11 135:20 141:11 142:8 146:5,13 150:27 152:24 153:7 154:20 155:1 156:17 158:6,22	identifying 29:17 39:20 48:8	incorporate 99:22 143:9	inquire 111:22
Honor's 158:11 159:20	IDS 84:11	incorporated 99:7	insert 25:24
hope 39:5 52:23 69:25 146:14	imagine 55:20 138:5	increased 18:18 21:12 156:11	inserts 26:7 54:4
hopefully-to-exist 145:11	immediately 39:19 139:25	increasing 97:3 156:7	insight 97:27
hopes 156:6	impact 155:12	incurred 84:14,28 85:6 118:7	Instagram 108:20 121:28 158:18
hoping 17:14 87:17	implement 151:12 158:11	indicating 84:14,28 85:6 118:7	instance 13:18 87:10, 13
host 143:23	implementation 141:19	indication 100:12	instituted 133:16
hour 88:24 90:8	implemented 154:3	individual 25:18 142:21 153:25	instructed 83:10
hours 34:15	implementing 144:23	individuals 129:11,15	instructive 88:27
housing 12:2 23:18 25:27 26:6 27:2,5,15 42:10 111:9	importance 153:1 157:2	inform 110:13 124:17 128:13	intend 133:27 134:12, 15
hundred 41:10 57:18 119:26 120:28	important 11:21 75:4 94:4,8 124:14 153:9 158:13	information 11:27 16:13 20:5,18 28:9 31:19,23 33:13 37:23, 27 39:8 40:7,25 47:18, 19 50:11 51:28 56:16 71:1,6,7,12 72:4,13 74:1,10 78:25 79:2,21, 28 81:6 84:27 85:1,20 86:17,19 87:21,25 88:2, 18,20 92:5,7 94:6,7,11 97:14 98:27 100:11	intending 134:25
hundreds 71:8	importantly 159:8		intensive 136:17
hurdles 124:15 144:6	improvements 61:2		intent 48:6 134:6
	in-box 111:3		intention 41:6 83:1
	in-detail 85:20		intentionally 52:2,14

interacting 15:5 98:11, 16	IOU 138:20 151:28	96:28 97:14 104:4 121:3	5,21 54:14 79:4
interaction 11:27 93:16	IOUS 60:6 83:10 138:26 139:27 141:1 144:9,12, 15 146:26 155:27	Justice 55:8 133:9	large 58:24 60:6 90:4 91:18 96:9
interconnectivity 46:17	ipad 99:4	<hr/> K <hr/>	larger 77:11 138:2
interest 49:5 58:24 65:16 67:14 132:11	issue 80:21 115:28 132:4,5,15,17 145:28	Kasnitz 49:14,16,20, 23,26 50:12,15,22 51:2, 11 135:28 143:13,16, 19,25 144:2 145:7,11, 20,26 146:5,8,16,23 149:12	largest 130:13
interested 25:15 35:22,25 43:17 115:25 116:11 118:15 122:3,7 123:2 137:9,13	issued 10:23	Kasnitz' 148:4	lastly 94:15 99:15
interesting 16:23 61:13 74:10 86:22 88:21	issues 115:10,15 121:24 134:11 151:9 152:27 154:5,6,8,11 157:24	Katz 133:8,11,12,14 134:27 135:3,9,13	late 34:15
interject 34:28 35:9 79:23	issuing 132:15	Kern 121:18 159:27	launched 21:17
intermediary 114:21 142:16	item 17:3 19:6 23:13 67:11 68:24	Kerns 112:12	Laura 62:15,18 93:3 156:14
intermittently 145:27	iteration 45:25 128:27	key 12:2 25:27 26:6 27:2,5 42:10 111:9	Law 91:12
internal 11:25	Ivonne 63:5,11,21 91:5 106:26,27 140:1 147:5 148:3 150:18	kind 15:20 18:20 36:24 59:12 61:1 76:23 87:26 104:28 113:7,19 125:2 128:27 129:7,18 136:12 147:8,15	Leadership 133:8,12
internally 17:12 30:21	<hr/> J <hr/>	knowing 151:21	learn 17:19
internet 52:4,15 115:28 125:14 138:19	Jamie 133:8,12	knowledge 17:4,13 145:17	learned 156:7 157:14
internet-access 115:10	Jason 123:26	<hr/> L <hr/>	learning 26:15 58:26 105:1
interpret 50:8,17 65:15 88:11	Jed 8:7	LA 125:13	leave 21:10 34:17 102:11,12 111:16,17 152:14 155:9
interpretation 88:6	Jennifer 62:23 154:26	labor 98:24	leaves 125:26
interpreted 50:28 67:15	join 110:22	lack 52:3,14,15	leaving 79:11
interrupt 66:4 71:11 95:14 114:2 115:4	Joseph 143:24	LADWP 127:28	led 96:16
interruption 9:26 36:27	judge 14:18 19:1 22:28 29:5,27 47:6 51:7 56:11,24 80:11 91:12 115:5 123:22 145:26 146:11 150:10	Lagunero 62:23,25 154:27,28	Lee 63:2,3,4 158:3,5
intervene 146:6	jumped 129:27	laid 157:1	left 110:4 111:11 121:2 123:14
introduce 8:1 19:12,17 61:27 106:26	June 72:1 79:7 99:16, 17,21 133:24 154:1	landlords 12:4 122:13	legislature 124:17
investor-owned 58:25 91:18	juris 70:7	language 115:10,15 155:9	legitimate 15:21,22
invitations 55:24	jurisdiction 24:13 69:11 70:8 97:10,12,21 101:27,28	language-line 115:21	length 43:5
invited 122:14	jurisdictions 26:20 64:21 70:9,11,18 73:9, 13,25 75:16,20 76:6,12 93:16,23,24 94:1,10,13, 17,23,26,28 95:10	languages 52:3,8 53:3,	lengthy 124:25
involved 136:19 138:10			lessons 156:7 157:14

limit 33:27 45:9	low-income 25:2 26:9 31:8 64:26 100:16 103:11 142:24	41:13 43:21 65:11 70:19 107:26 148:10 153:23	memo 111:21
limited 22:4	lower 69:5	manager 62:27 63:6 122:11,15	memorandums 138:14
lines 111:17	LSP 87:27 130:14 131:20 139:19	manner 28:2	memory 92:22
link 26:4,6 31:18,25 54:2 109:21,24 122:23 142:12	LSPS 87:24 131:20	manual 40:10 74:25 83:14 86:13	Mendez 145:28 146:4
links 57:7 111:8 158:16	Luis 112:11	manually 74:24 138:20	mention 128:14
LISC 116:7	lump 114:28	March 39:24 72:1 84:15 93:25 107:20 113:28 114:27 117:8 125:22	mentioned 20:8 79:4, 15,19 83:19 95:23 96:13 102:26 111:12 124:13 131:27 132:13, 22 139:17 141:14 144:9 151:18
LISC's 119:19	lump-sum 114:28	marketing 25:22 78:23 93:18 98:3 157:8	mentioning 81:5
list 20:4 23:14 65:1,5 70:21 73:23 74:16 107:24 108:6,27 133:7 159:7	lunch 60:19 88:24 89:3 91:17	Marsh 8:11,23 9:3,4 28:20,24,26 30:28 31:2 32:7,22 37:21 54:7,10, 16,17 59:1,4	Menzies 32:23
listed 74:18 84:22	M	mass 63:5 84:3	Merza 55:10 56:4,9,11, 13,20,23 143:15 150:9, 10,12
listen 55:4	Mad 51:20 54:27 135:28 141:7,27	match 71:24	Merza's 150:25
lists 65:3	made 32:1 33:15 38:2 49:20 51:16 65:20 67:8, 9 78:15 91:28 99:26 103:6 108:14,18 112:6, 8 122:11,26 158:25	materials 98:14 155:10	message 82:14 102:12,13 111:12
live 35:23	mail 34:13 155:9	Matlock 8:10,27 9:7,8, 18,22 10:13 11:13,17 13:15 14:7,8 15:8,18 17:27 18:6,11 19:4,10 27:21 35:27 52:25,26 53:7 57:1,2	messages 21:10 41:10 110:4 111:16 122:8 123:14
LLS 115:26	majority 112:20 137:11	Matlock's 18:9	messaging 155:15
local 22:14,22 24:13 26:20,25 27:1 93:16,22 94:1,13,17,23,26,28 95:10 96:27 97:9,11,14, 21 116:6,7,9 133:21 134:2,13 159:14	make 19:6 21:9 24:27 28:1,3 32:12 33:26 34:19 37:15 38:3,5,9,10 39:6 40:19 42:16 51:7 53:8 59:17 61:2 68:17 69:22 70:27 75:4,9 83:27 89:6 91:21 107:8 109:16 111:16 121:4,22 131:8 136:11 138:27 139:16 151:6 152:18	matters 145:3	met 47:22 116:27 147:24
locals 76:23 104:28	makes 16:24 86:8,14 105:24	Mazzeo 8:15,16,17 10:6,10 39:4 42:22 60:2,23,25 61:14,19	method 100:20 105:23
location 148:26	making 15:21 34:21 35:28 46:16,18 53:11 57:8 80:21 83:18,22 108:11 109:10,11 110:22 114:17 117:11 125:25 144:26	meant 33:8 144:19	methods 153:12
logistically 43:16	manage 65:7 87:18	media 40:17 79:14 98:10 108:19 112:5 121:28 158:17	metrics 64:11 68:4 69:2 82:28
long 43:11 80:24 88:25 112:28 113:5 119:9 125:11	manageable 57:14	meet 107:23 129:16	Meza 63:5,11,12,21 91:5 106:26,27,28 113:16,23 115:14 124:26 125:1,10 126:2, 6 128:11,13 140:1,3 147:5,6 148:3,8 150:18, 20
longer 60:9 75:3 117:16	managed 139:19	meeting 32:3 92:3 118:4 152:14	Michelle 8:18 9:1
looked 45:15 97:20	management 20:6	meetings 92:3 117:1,9, 28	microphone 49:15,18, 21 146:12,14
loop 103:27		Melissa 49:14,20 135:28 143:12,16,19 145:7	migrated 146:15
loose 120:25		member 16:2,3 57:3	million 95:8 128:16 132:3 140:10
Los 112:10			mimics 142:16
lost 128:23			
lot 21:19 105:9 109:28 116:1,4 117:8,27 118:2 119:1,2,7,9 125:12,13, 19 139:14			
low 25:8 30:1 36:11 136:8 140:5			

mind 47:15 112:25 115:8 134:7	multi-day 42:28	noon 60:8,10,17	obtain 107:16 158:14
minimize 155:12	multi-jurisdictional 48:23	normal 137:15	obtained 107:24
minutes 109:18	multi-step 42:28	Norte 22:17,18	obvious 82:13
mirror 151:27	multiple 46:22 53:11 70:23 79:15 126:8 128:24 131:3	Northern 22:16,21	occur 41:14
misinterpretations 70:1	multitude 79:4	notated 27:12	occurred 43:16 66:23 157:20
mitigate 141:23	mute 97:7 132:28 135:24 141:26	note 32:1 34:17 38:9 51:15 56:14 60:16 61:5 69:9,28 143:20 152:12	occurring 46:9
model 42:14	muted 53:18 57:28 58:1 80:10 84:16	noted 105:15	offer 32:13 41:15 113:7 115:26 120:10 147:9 155:14
modify 99:20	MX 51:23 52:10 55:1 141:10 142:7	notes 42:5 62:13	offered 110:14 115:20
moment 9:23 28:23,25 34:26 35:7		notice 34:3 66:6 88:13	offering 31:10 151:1
Monday 95:28 96:8,17 110:24	<hr/> N <hr/>	noticed 118:10 119:14 129:23	offers 142:13
money 16:1 109:27 121:9,13,21,22 128:20 136:13 139:17 140:9	narrow 12:23 110:16 146:24	notified 31:17 122:28 140:12	Office 121:12
moneys 106:6,16	nature 36:18 76:17 96:26	notify 108:21 143:23	offices 79:22
monitor 44:23 45:23	nearing 88:24	notifying 33:17 34:14 118:22	one-hour 60:19
month 21:26 22:4 33:16 87:13,16 99:13, 17 122:4	necessarily 50:27 100:9 145:3	nuance 88:21	ongoing 157:22,25
monthly 31:16 81:24 87:2	needed 60:10 97:19,20 109:15 117:3,12,28 118:22 119:20 123:11 126:27 150:6	number 9:13 17:9 20:19 28:6 36:10 39:22 58:8 65:12 67:11 68:5, 8,15 69:12,15,18 72:28 73:9 78:4,14 84:2 87:2 95:18 100:27 110:2 111:17,18 117:5,20,21 119:19 127:1,3 131:16, 22,23 138:6 159:15	online 77:18 113:2
moratorium 30:5 33:4 133:17	needing 108:2 115:27	numbers 10:19 11:16 12:10 29:28 30:2 62:7, 12 66:1,6 68:15,18 69:3,4,19 71:21,24 85:4 95:28 96:1,2,3 97:2 105:7 107:9 120:1 127:8,19,26 128:2 130:5,6 154:19 157:26	onsert 99:17
morning 8:6,16 11:19 14:8 19:3 39:14 62:9, 17,25 63:3 105:19	nefarious 129:6	numerous 133:25 134:10	onserts 26:7
mortgage 144:23	neighbor 112:4		open 47:4 142:26
motion 142:9	Neil 62:27 63:14,23 77:27 91:5 129:22 136:28	<hr/> O <hr/>	opened 11:6
motivated 27:18	network 98:13	Obispo 112:11	opening 77:10
move 12:9 18:5,7 58:24 59:2 60:24 93:17 98:3 100:3 134:15	networks 116:9	obligations 131:3	operational 141:16
moved 94:24 117:20	newsletter 79:6		Operations 62:20
moves 147:11	NGOS 26:25		opinion 105:19
moving 57:15 76:3 123:5 145:14 156:6	night 67:21 78:13		opportunities 12:5 156:9
much-needed 155:24	nodding 48:10 51:11 74:7 90:1		opportunity 11:20 30:14 34:7 40:22 48:21 64:14 127:12 141:2 155:19 156:26
	non-renters 100:10		opposed 29:16,20 105:21 114:11 138:19 142:17 155:28
	nonhcd 132:25		opt 105:21
			opt-in 29:20 105:28 155:28
			opted 137:22
			option 49:5,9 139:20 158:19

orally 109:21 111:2 124:2	owner 12:21 148:22,24	participate 13:1 59:7 98:23,25 135:5	134:1,12,24,25,26 135:16 139:2,22
Orange 68:21 70:16 73:19 112:10 121:17 159:26	owner's 147:12	participated 37:10	payments 11:7,11 17:12 23:21 44:15 46:18 69:11 73:16,18, 26 74:15 75:18 76:8 78:3 80:21 92:23,26,27 94:12,17,22,27 95:5,7, 11,22 96:10,13,18,19, 24 97:3,6 101:11 106:10 116:23 120:2 121:5,6,7,16 125:25 127:20 131:28 132:5,26 134:19 135:7 139:5 144:20 155:27 156:5 159:3
order 15:13 39:27 40:24 52:22 56:28 70:27 72:3 74:28 84:26 85:17 113:1 128:19 139:24 143:21 150:18 159:23	owners 12:19 144:27 147:11	participating 29:7 37:18 48:27 65:16 67:3, 5,14	
order 15:13 39:27 40:24 52:22 56:28 70:27 72:3 74:28 84:26 85:17 113:1 128:19 139:24 143:21 150:18 159:23	P	parties 19:1 28:17 48:22,27 49:10 52:12 55:6 105:17 117:12 124:1 126:21 135:26 138:10 152:10,28	
Oregon 21:8	p.m. 90:3,5,9 91:1	partner 55:27 116:9 120:18 137:23	
organization 38:6,22	P.O. 132:23 137:15	partnered 116:6 120:12	payor 73:11
organizations 48:9 98:12 153:19 155:11	Pacific 61:22 62:23,26 63:23 77:26 129:22 136:28 149:3 154:27	partnering 116:9 155:10	pays 86:9
originally 117:16,24	Pacificorp 8:8,11,25 19:15,28 22:12 24:5 25:1 27:13 31:6 33:3,6, 9 60:8	partners 32:12	pending 16:11 96:10 159:2
other's 55:4	Pacificorp's 18:1 21:13	partnership 26:24 156:3 159:23	penny 121:22
outbound 35:25 40:8 41:9 64:18,22 78:14 83:2 155:8	package 129:7	partnerships 156:8	people 14:19 18:12 30:6 67:23 85:6 109:11 110:22 122:24 147:25
outreach 15:2 17:5 21:11,24,28 23:16 33:6, 11,23 34:4,10 35:20 46:7 52:1,7,11,13,23 53:3,25 54:4 55:18,22, 27 58:6 75:10 93:18 98:4 101:2 103:21 107:3,7 108:7,9,26 111:25 112:2 113:3 120:8 123:6 140:12 146:28 153:11 154:6 155:6,8 157:8 158:26 159:6,18,25	pages 98:8 112:28 113:6 119:17 124:13	parts 15:1 64:17 110:27 112:27	percent 14:20 18:11 57:18 83:17,22 101:23 102:8 120:28 149:6
outreached 40:10	paid 11:5 29:19 30:17 45:1,11,13 81:18 82:3 87:12 88:4	party 30:12 49:12 133:6 143:20	percentage 30:17 101:26
outstanding 55:23 87:10 107:18 125:27	pandemic 113:27 118:7,9 120:26 125:19, 26 153:4 156:22 158:10	past 20:25 22:6 25:6 37:26 45:17 46:8 60:11 79:7 84:25 85:8 87:1 102:17 144:12 147:3 155:21	Perfect 42:1
overcame 104:14	panel 8:3 55:3,15 141:12	past-year 85:14	perform 42:17
overcome 46:3,15 104:8 159:9	panelist 49:21 143:21	pausing 19:18	performed 107:3
overlap 48:7 103:8	panelists 60:27 61:6	pay 27:23 119:5 122:18 155:17	period 39:23 45:10 71:28 72:8 80:27 85:1 101:23 107:19 110:17 113:26 114:25 117:7 120:26 125:21
overlapping 47:16	paper 21:4 121:10,11, 17	paying 44:1,8 114:26 152:26	periods 72:9
overpaid 87:16	paperless 20:27 21:2,3	payment 15:6,16,24 23:4,10 28:1 33:20,26 43:20,26 44:18,21,22 46:10 66:27 68:14,25 70:25 73:13,20,24 74:8, 11,18 80:17,19,22,25 81:22,28 87:8,20 89:19, 22 96:25 97:15,28 101:11 104:7 106:4 114:18 115:1 118:14 119:24 121:14 133:20	person 17:12 21:15 35:4,16 38:23 126:12
overwhelmed 119:8	part 26:15 27:17 28:7 38:20 43:19,20 52:19 66:16 68:24 73:21 79:1 101:4 103:13 110:12 111:24 112:2,15,18 120:5 121:25 124:16 134:8 145:18		personal 57:12 142:10
owe 45:6 87:3	partially 87:12		personnel 43:7
owed 88:7 109:27 110:7 113:25 119:5	participant 29:7		perspective 16:15 69:10 82:9 86:15,27 87:17 130:4 151:11,28
	participants 18:15		PG&E 78:5,11,16,19,22 79:3 80:4,20,22,28

82:2,21 86:16 88:17 89:11,22 92:5 130:4 132:5,6,11,16 133:16, 23,27 134:4,12,15 137:13 139:17 140:21 149:25 155:2,5,18 156:2,6	pointed 56:1	previously 107:25 123:14	15:3,6,13,19,28 16:26 18:17,22 19:24 20:1,19 21:14,15,17 22:11,13, 23 23:10 24:4 26:5 29:8 30:18 31:18 32:13 36:3, 16 37:5,10,24 40:22 41:16 42:4 44:2,14 45:2,8,18 46:1 48:24 50:2,10 51:5,8 54:2 55:19 57:21 58:9 64:10, 15 65:17 66:14,16 67:14 71:22 77:12 78:13,24 79:5,15,19 82:18 86:9 87:23 88:6, 9,15 93:27 94:2 98:6,28 99:12,20,22 103:20,24 105:20,23,28 108:17 109:4 110:13 112:1,15 118:12 121:26 122:2,6, 11,16,21 123:16 126:8, 12 135:6,11 137:22 142:21 144:7,17,18,19, 24,26 145:8,9,12,15,21 146:20 147:1,10 148:5, 21 150:3 153:21,26 154:13 155:7 156:28 157:3,11,13,26
PG&E's 83:1 117:4 131:17 137:10 155:13 156:9	points 16:19 45:27 98:19 109:2	primarily 21:14 22:20 53:5,26 54:6	
phase 59:25	pool 12:23 20:24 23:15 39:18 47:24 107:11 138:2 158:24	primary 54:13	
phone 20:18 35:2,14, 21,25,26,28 36:12 42:18 52:19 53:9 58:8, 13 59:8 83:15,19 111:17,18 116:3 119:19 125:14,16	population 39:27 47:25 100:14,15,19 102:10	prior 22:1 33:7 34:2 38:16 45:20,21 74:13 78:22 87:16 108:8,16, 26 114:17 120:13 154:1 158:14	
phones 109:23	portal 42:12 86:7 87:24 130:11 131:19 138:17, 19	privacy 104:9 151:20	proactive 47:8
physical 79:8	positively 14:10	proactively 97:13	proactivity 104:24
pick 55:5 136:5	possibility 59:27 138:11	procedural 60:5	procedures 94:5
picture 45:8,25	possibly 21:13 30:7 36:12 37:26 88:19 148:14	proceed 49:16 68:3	proceeding 60:18 86:24
piece 16:14 77:5 129:9, 19 130:13	post 121:12 127:14	process 11:25 13:8 15:10,23 17:22 19:27 27:5,28 42:28 43:1,3,6, 25,28 44:3,5,6,17 45:13 50:9 55:16 56:15 57:6, 18,24 58:20,21 61:3 64:6 70:12,13,25,26 73:24 74:27 75:2,4,24, 26 77:9,17,19 78:18 80:24 81:13 82:15,24 83:3 85:18 86:13,18 92:15,16 94:13 95:11 96:10,27 97:1,5,28 99:27 104:3,16 106:3 107:2 110:26 114:8 116:13 117:4,14,21 118:28 119:15 121:20 125:5,8 127:16 132:15 136:17 138:5,7,27,28 139:22,24 141:3 142:19 154:4 155:20 156:4 157:5,18	
pieces 143:7	postcard 79:8		programs 19:8 21:7 40:13 62:28 65:3 108:22 123:4 145:1 153:8,14 155:7,15 156:1,20 159:22
place 17:17 24:17 43:21 55:16 70:12,14 72:3 73:10 82:26 83:2 92:17 95:11 126:14 130:18 138:16 142:6	posted 9:17 108:19 121:27 158:15		progress 10:28 11:2 12:8 28:11 64:17
placing 83:14	posting 159:3		promise 63:8
plan 11:28 33:26 99:8, 21 107:26 142:5 148:10	potential 60:8 66:13 99:11 100:8 141:24 153:23		promote 40:18 98:7,9 99:19 103:20
planned 99:16 142:3	potentially 29:15 66:15 71:9 137:26		promoted 143:20,26
planning 60:21 123:5	potentially-eligible 144:11		promoting 26:4 98:6 157:10
plans 33:20 46:28 133:23 155:17	Powerpoints 13:21		promotion 61:17 121:25
platforms 70:27	practices 36:18 61:1 75:3		promotions 64:19
play 153:9	preferences 55:26		proper 13:27 19:7 28:6 38:23
pleased 40:25 93:9	prepare 76:7		properly 124:16
pledging 138:17	prepared 22:24 23:2,8, 12 33:12 75:9,18		properties 149:1
point 18:9 23:24 33:21 38:2 46:1,25 48:19 49:10 57:13,16,25 61:4, 16 67:2 80:25 96:7 97:19 131:8 137:5 148:6 152:14	presentation 122:12, 21	processed 95:4 96:11	property 147:11,13 148:23,24
	press 79:15,17,18	processes 76:3 77:16 78:2 86:12 94:25 95:11 116:25 128:19 151:21	
	pretty 41:8	productive 157:20	
	prevent 155:23	program 9:15 11:11, 15,22,23 13:12,16,23	
	previous 29:25		

proponent 138:12	pursuant 159:6,19		76:1 92:18
proportionately 105:8	pursued 47:27	R	real 18:22 30:3 49:8 59:4 86:18
proposal 141:22 142:9, 11,13,15	pushing 153:16	Rahon 62:20 63:18,19 64:1 91:6 93:6,8 96:12 105:12,26 106:23 136:20,24 140:25,27 148:16,18 150:26,28 151:2,25	reality 137:20
proposed 33:18 142:19	put 25:24 28:12 40:2 49:14 51:21 70:13 108:22	raise 49:2,8	realized 21:17 110:27 124:24
prospective 12:24	putting 33:19	raising 49:11	reason 12:22 102:22 107:27 128:6,28 129:2, 6,28
protect 134:4	Q	ramped 96:22	reasons 29:26
protected 104:11 134:7	qualification 12:6	randomized 100:20 103:4,6	reassuring 157:16
protecting 71:1 80:28 81:2	qualifications 15:20 37:24	randomly 102:27	receivable 37:16 38:6
protection 71:28 133:24 134:18	qualified 79:12 107:27	range 103:2,3 118:17 126:21	receive 11:7,11 15:16, 24 21:4 23:4 37:11 38:9 40:14 43:21,26 44:5,6 55:18 56:16 68:20 72:18 73:13,19 75:18 76:7 82:19 84:18 88:16 96:24 100:1 102:18 127:6,20 132:4 134:23, 25 140:9
protections 99:9,18 134:5	qualify 57:10 112:26 148:14 155:16	rapid 153:27	received 19:28 20:9 26:21 43:3 58:9,12 59:10 62:13 64:23 65:22 66:27 68:10,13, 19 72:10 74:14,16,23 80:17,19 83:10 84:8 89:14,18 92:23,25,26 95:7,22 101:10,22 111:23 118:27 120:22 121:16,20 125:23 127:4,5 132:25 133:20 134:1,13 135:17 139:12 157:6
provide 9:20 11:16 32:18 37:27 48:3 54:2 58:6 64:10,14 66:2 72:12,13,16 88:18,20 92:4,8,9,19 97:22 98:27 102:2 127:13 130:18 136:12 137:26 145:22 150:4 153:22	question 18:7 30:9 33:12 34:2 37:19 38:14, 20 47:14 48:28 49:6 50:7,13,26 51:15,21,25 52:6,20,27 54:18 55:10 56:5,7,8,14 58:4,16 59:25 60:5 61:7 70:6 96:16 104:22 105:18,27 123:24 124:9 126:3,4 127:23 133:15 134:4,8 135:3,13 136:21 137:25 141:8,11,13 143:7,10, 11 145:19 146:17,24 148:4 150:9,13,25 151:26 152:15	rate 18:11 21:12 105:16 136:8 140:5	receives 106:4 114:28
provided 31:18 66:1 68:12 69:1 71:26 98:13 119:18 155:27 159:15	questions 18:3 23:23 28:18 29:5 36:20 38:26 47:4 55:4,23,26 56:6 76:17 77:4 79:24 89:2, 27 102:7 103:27 104:19 109:4,25 110:1,7 111:28 113:8 122:16,19 123:18 124:1,8 125:2 126:20,24 133:6,22 143:2,22 144:4 146:9, 21 152:9	ratepayers 142:22	receiving 10:25 24:12 37:17 38:4,17 39:10 44:24 68:8,16 71:6 78:2 80:4 81:20 94:22,26 96:13,20 119:24
providers 79:20 158:19	queue 136:1	rates 154:6	recess 90:8
providing 20:4 29:15 31:23 32:14 37:22 38:7 71:12,20 72:4 78:24 79:28 80:1 85:1,2 92:6 106:6 138:8 148:12 154:11,15 159:10	quickly 64:24 76:1 94:14,20 96:23 105:11 141:5 157:6	reach 12:26 17:1,15 24:26 27:19,22,26 33:1 38:22 39:21 40:13 41:2 50:10 52:2,14,27 54:23 66:8 100:21 102:9,14 103:16,19,25 108:5 110:1	recognize 108:21
proxy 148:26 149:26		reached 20:2,10,12,14 22:1 24:8,9,20,23 26:3 29:11 31:9,28 32:11 41:12 44:12 50:1 102:24 110:24 111:10 116:17,26 120:14 132:6,9 137:12 159:5	recognized 157:2
public 18:20,21 122:15 155:26 159:21		reaches 16:18	recognizes 158:7
published 122:23		reaching 15:26 16:4 20:3 25:19 32:5 33:16 36:12 115:12 118:13 138:19 157:9	recommendations 45:28 46:2 48:25 141:22
pull 9:16,24 21:27		read 13:21 69:4,13 74:4 119:27	
pulled 22:3		readily 147:8	
pure 41:5 42:8		readjust 10:3	
purpose 51:1		ready 12:9 27:23 39:3	
purposes 45:11 60:22 149:15			

record 8:2 69:22 90:6,7 91:11 92:24 93:12 139:4	84:27 142:27	reported 64:11 71:21 72:19	resources 25:22 78:23 109:12
recorded 122:20	relief 15:27 16:26 18:19 45:26 46:1 55:20 68:9, 10,16,19,24 75:5 81:15	reporter 9:26 22:27,28 34:27 35:8,10 36:27 145:25 146:2	respond 8:22 15:3 151:1,2 152:7
records 100:8	88:27 101:22 127:4 137:27 139:5,12,25 141:4 142:18 148:5	reporters 19:19	responded 14:10,20 57:4
recover 153:3	153:24,28 155:24 156:20 157:6 158:14	reporting 32:27 70:4 81:8 83:12 127:10,16 157:27	responding 10:16
reduce 80:7	relieve 130:24	reports 39:10 102:2 127:14 129:24 144:16 154:25	response 18:11 19:28 21:12 36:21 41:9 48:4 58:10 80:28 143:17 146:2 148:19 150:24 151:15 154:6
redundant 49:27	relying 13:25	representative 35:24 123:26 136:6 152:18,21	responses 20:9,15 58:12
reengagement 55:20	remainder 57:17	representatives 32:18 37:22 40:6 78:26 141:19 154:23	responsive 98:15,21
reestablishing 156:3	remaining 13:6,12 159:5	representing 59:16 106:28	result 94:21 159:24
refer 28:5 37:6 70:7	remains 78:5 155:2	reps 37:2,14 54:22,25 115:15	results 131:9
reference 79:26 80:7 82:5 84:5 108:18	remarks 77:10 152:18 154:21	request 75:28 83:13 92:17,28 130:5	resume 90:3
referenced 18:18 29:14 35:27 77:10 125:6	remembering 92:2	requested 154:12	resumed 91:7,16
references 143:4	remind 10:22 28:16 56:6,8	requesting 107:19	resuming 90:5
referring 27:1 130:10, 11,13	reminders 55:25	requests 65:23 78:10 83:12 94:14,19 113:4	return 84:11 110:4
reflect 69:26 139:10	remove 155:22	require 73:17 74:19	returned 89:15
reflected 96:2 154:14	rent 12:3 145:4	required 12:6 73:20 74:21 108:14 113:21	returning 41:11
reform 142:20	rental 9:15 10:17 11:15 19:24 64:10 108:17 122:1 129:8,14 144:17 148:14 149:1 156:27	requirements 109:3 110:12 158:12	revert 148:21,23
refresh 92:22	renter 12:22 100:13 107:22 147:11,18 148:25 149:6,8	requiring 153:25	review 89:12
refreshed 21:27	renters 12:4,18 64:28 79:7 99:11 100:8,10 107:17 144:10,16,27 146:27 147:9,14,22,26 148:10,27 149:10 150:5	rescinded 83:13	reviewed 64:24 65:27 113:2
regard 41:7 48:24 52:6, 22	rents 152:3	resend 97:24	reviewing 159:11
regional 159:20	rep 115:18	residential 78:27 79:5	reviews 138:16
registry 65:4	repaid 118:7	resolution 64:23 139:16	revise 141:21
regular 115:2 121:14 132:18	repeating 134:8	resolve 34:8	Reyes 62:23,25 154:26, 28
regulatory 38:8	rephrase 37:1	resolved 135:25	risk 155:12
reiterates 153:15	report 10:24,28 12:8 27:13 28:11 42:5 66:10, 17 69:22,27 96:8 127:13,19 137:7,19 154:17	resolving 34:20	Ritta 55:10 143:15 150:8
rejected 83:7			Riverside 112:11 120:11 122:12,22 158:20 159:28
related 56:27 98:14,27 99:8,18 133:22 154:6			role 12:3 35:3,15 153:9
relationship 159:14			rolling 134:19
release 79:17,18			room 8:19
releases 79:16			
relevance 84:24			
relevant 50:26 58:18			

roughly 80:27 83:17	scenarios 117:18	78:20 79:25,27 80:5	151:17 153:8
round 56:3	schedules 109:15	92:19 93:26,28 98:17	similarly 51:25
routes 39:28 40:1	screen 19:21 41:27	107:8 109:8 110:15	simply 10:26,28 69:12
routing 138:25 139:26	49:1,8	111:19,20 112:9 115:21	84:7
rows 9:19	SDG&E 62:21 93:12,	117:6 118:3 120:10	Singh 62:27 63:14,15,
Rulemaking 91:14	23,26 94:11 136:6	132:8 137:10 147:10,	23 77:27 78:4 80:15
rules 136:11	156:19 157:1,22	12,18,19 155:13,26	84:21 86:21 89:2,7 91:5
ruling 10:23 11:28	SDG&E's 93:28	services 22:16,21	129:22 130:3,7,8,22
32:24 50:3,18 65:6	seamless 156:4	115:25 150:16 155:14	134:3 135:2 136:28
70:20,22 78:9,22 83:10	Sean 8:9,27	SESSION 91:1	137:2 138:6 149:5,16
100:25 107:4 108:3	secondary 119:19	set 24:24,25 25:5 70:26	single 12:27
109:10 116:27 120:13	secure 70:26 92:15	85:18 106:2 111:2	sir 135:19
130:9 158:11,12,15,22,	securely 94:7	116:24,26 117:28 121:7	Siskiyou 22:17
23 159:20	securing 10:16	132:22 134:17 138:14	situation 138:1
run 60:11 86:7 115:9	security 89:11 138:15	sets 130:10	sixteen-and-a-half-
running 11:22 65:3	151:9	setting 116:10	thousand 39:26
	select 103:7	seven-day 80:27	size 67:18,19,23 100:23
	selected 20:23 102:27	shaking 35:10	size 67:18,19,23 100:23
	selection 100:20	share 32:9 51:28 58:28	skipped 74:9
	send 20:17 65:17 72:8	64:24 70:8 75:21 79:20	slightly 11:24 146:9
	73:27 74:2 75:27 81:5	142:1	sluggish 11:24
	84:6 89:13,17,21 97:9,	shared 94:7 95:13	small 8:4 10:4,27 11:1,
	13,15,17 110:17 117:4	105:9 112:26 133:5	3 28:19 36:2 48:23
	131:28 132:23	140:27	60:14 61:4 84:2 131:13
	sending 73:2 79:6	sharing 72:2 86:6	smaller 25:17 36:9,10
	97:11 137:14	108:13 119:6 130:12,17	57:16 75:8 96:26
	sends 84:9	138:13 154:7	snags 75:24
	Senior 22:17	Shasta 22:19	Socal 68:7,12,23 70:17
	sense 16:24 18:22	Shawane 63:2,4 158:3	74:23
	43:10 44:27 101:16	She'll 62:6	Socalgas 63:2,4
	105:25	short 144:3	106:28 121:27 122:18
	sensitive 145:13	shortly 59:26	127:1 128:17 132:21
	separate 42:7 44:8	show 113:6	147:5,6 148:19 150:19
	85:18 145:1	showing 41:28	158:7,11,15,18,21,23,
	separately 129:25	shows 127:2	26,27 159:8,13,16,25
	130:1	sic 26:7 99:17	Socalgas' 158:16
	sequence 135:27	signed 30:15 107:28	159:18
	serve 84:23 153:7	significant 14:13	social 40:17 79:14
	serves 22:17,18,19	significantly 97:4	98:10 108:19 112:4
	service 8:8,27 16:4	similar 13:23 15:19	121:28 158:17
	17:9 18:20 22:12 27:15	31:6 33:2 56:14 57:21	solicit 126:20
	37:2,14 42:3 54:22,25	92:5 117:4 139:6	solidified 94:25
	71:20,25 72:17,18,27	141:15 142:23 144:22,	sort 10:9 33:5 127:18
		26 148:19 149:25	131:6

sorted 12:17	Spires 8:12,25 9:5,6 19:12,14,22 21:16 23:6 24:7 27:7,11 29:4,10 53:15,24,25 54:9,12 57:26,28 58:1,2,22	state-funded 153:26 154:2	100:12
sought 128:7	split 114:25	stated 66:11 141:18 142:11,19	strongly 39:5
sound 10:10 22:26 39:13	spoke 80:19 89:20 115:20	statement 21:4 59:17, 21 91:28 110:15 152:23 154:28 156:16 158:5	structure 142:15
sounds 15:8 24:17 25:23 76:28 136:16	spoken 40:11 53:12,21	statewide 87:24 130:11 131:19	struggled 147:2
source 39:8 50:22 77:18	spot 19:20	stating 93:11	struggling 40:21 156:22
sources 78:7 153:2 155:4	spreadsheet 84:10,11 94:9	status 56:18 59:23 113:13 154:17	stub 74:18
Southern 61:21,23,28 62:3 63:21,25 64:7 72:11 91:20 106:24 138:23 149:24 151:14 152:20 158:3	spur 16:13	step 57:6,7 58:11,13 74:8	submission 73:23 139:2
Southwest 8:14,18 9:1 10:1 39:13 41:21 42:3 46:5 47:7 50:1,16,17 51:26 52:12	stab 34:2	step-by-step 115:12	submit 113:9,20 131:2
spam 20:21	staff 11:26 16:3 28:10 35:4,16 53:10,11	steps 13:5,12 16:8,9, 25,27 19:26 32:5 38:19 70:12 75:13 76:6 131:7	submits 92:17
Spanish 53:2,6,8,13 54:3,5,14,21 115:16,17	stand 78:17 86:12 91:7	Steve 62:19 63:18 64:1 91:6 93:6 136:20,24 140:25 148:16 150:28	submitted 67:8 69:20 89:8,10 94:17
speak 11:20 35:23 43:5 51:18 52:2,8 115:16,17 154:24	stand-by 115:18	stick 152:13	submitting 65:21 71:5 73:26 80:22
speaker 57:28 84:16 141:26	standard 36:18	sticking 66:4	subsequent 140:18
speaker's 22:9,24	standardize 73:22	stimulus 106:6 136:13	subsequently 111:15
speakers 50:1 53:8	standardized 55:25 77:17,19 94:9 105:23	stood 78:16 83:4	subset 130:19
speaking 61:6	standardizing 74:26	stop 119:14 145:23	substantial 158:7
speaks 143:9	Stano 51:20,23 52:10 54:27 55:1 135:28 141:7,10,27 142:7	stories 119:6	success 47:11 105:16 136:8 140:5 156:11
special 121:12	staring 107:4	straight 93:5 137:4	successful 26:18 82:15,26
specialists 98:18	stark 104:23	strategies 105:9 124:21	successfully 23:5 82:18 104:27
specific 53:3 56:21 65:25 77:4 83:12 110:17 114:25 120:26 142:4 149:17	start 11:24 12:14 13:11 19:22 39:16,17 61:28 64:6 69:14 93:11 107:1 108:7 109:1,11 120:1 134:19 150:18,24	strategy 25:19 52:7 58:14	sudden 82:10
specifically 16:7 34:10 46:15 52:7 70:24 98:7 99:10 116:17 129:23 132:2 133:15 135:14 138:3 142:2 152:1 153:24 155:25	started 43:2 47:21 92:15 96:13,19,23 98:5 107:12,26 108:4,9 109:10,16 158:18,23	stream 44:21,23 46:10 138:27	suggest 9:28 48:26 49:16 56:4
speculate 102:16	starting 108:8,26 127:6,20	streamline 127:16 138:28 150:14 157:4,18	suggesting 53:20
speculative 143:3	state 12:21 26:23,27 27:15 28:8 29:14 42:12 77:12 93:13 106:9 137:26 139:13 144:7, 26,28 145:8,9,12 152:26 153:1,23 156:20	streamlined 97:2 106:5,11 114:8 125:5,8 136:10 141:3 154:4	sum 87:2
		streamlining 156:10	supervision 15:26 16:3
		streams 121:15	supervisor 16:3
		strings 18:24	support 116:8 159:11, 14,17
		strong 65:16 67:13	supporting 78:6 153:6 155:3
			supports 93:12
			supposed 72:16
			surprise 30:1 87:7

surprised 46:6 49:28	126:4 128:18 133:25	thousand 21:25 25:14	totals 132:3
surrounding 154:18	134:10 135:24 141:15	119:25,26,27	touch 10:20 28:12
survey 55:25	Technology 49:14	thousands 71:9 75:1	trace 82:12
swear 8:2,21 61:21	143:14	threads 141:13	track 44:15 69:10 100:9
swoop 130:24	telephone 159:15	threshold 41:12	132:24
sworn 8:23,25,28 9:1	telling 75:11 85:3,5	Thursday 109:9	tracking 9:17,19 82:23
63:22,24,26 64:2	88:3 111:2	tight 94:5	131:13
system 73:10 74:4	template 71:5 72:15	time 10:2 17:20 33:21,	trained 32:17 37:2,22
100:11 106:3 107:18	94:9 104:8 105:5	25 39:23 42:26 43:5	111:27 155:14
110:10 118:13 147:20	tenants 122:13	44:20 48:18 50:20 56:6	transfer 43:27 92:16
148:22,28	tenor 118:25	57:14,16,25 58:24 59:9	121:19
	tentative 142:5	60:28 71:4,10,13,25,28	transit 104:12
T	term 71:13,14	72:7,9,24 76:12 88:25	transition 99:8,21
	terms 35:1,13 45:5	89:8 95:1 109:16	translated 79:3
T.E.A.C.H. 22:19	64:22 66:3 67:10 68:5,	119:17 124:11 130:7	translation 115:22
table 65:12 68:3 69:1,7,	8,18 70:19 73:26,28	131:12 134:23 143:8	trickle 120:2
8,12 95:2,15,17 96:2	81:8 145:8,16	150:16 154:19 156:24	trouble 125:24
101:5 131:15 132:1	territory 24:5 25:1	timeline 16:6 60:12	true 45:23
137:19	27:15 42:3 93:26,28	139:21	truth 63:9,10
tables 65:25,27 127:18	107:8 112:9 120:10	timely 28:2	Tuesday 95:3,24
tabulation 39:25	127:28 132:8 137:11	times 36:19 46:22	Tulare 112:12
tack 131:6	147:18 156:9	101:2 102:15 125:3,7	turn 8:22 10:13 11:10,
Tagalog 53:4	test 121:22	132:9	12 17:24,28 18:1 22:9
taking 15:6 16:1 34:1	testified 8:24,26,28 9:2	titled 44:26	30:28 39:4 49:7,15,17
49:1 70:13 80:24 88:25	63:22,24,26 64:2 91:7	today 8:18 12:9 13:26	53:15,24 77:24,26
131:6	testify 18:8	18:9 26:16 43:25 44:19	94:19 99:23 101:5
talk 11:8 34:6,11,18	testimony 154:15	60:28 62:19 63:4 69:28	104:19 106:22,24 124:1
61:1 75:8 93:15 123:3,	157:2	93:10 105:18 154:5	129:26 133:6 135:26
15	thing 10:6 100:6 102:4	156:7,28	152:10 154:26
talked 124:23	106:14 116:1 137:2	today's 17:16 133:26	turned 11:6 88:17
talking 25:17,20 35:20	150:1 153:6	134:11 156:11	turning 60:6 134:24
36:9 37:12 69:6 75:1	things 11:23 102:16	told 112:23,24	Twitter 108:20 122:1
77:8 93:19 98:18 109:2,	107:10 121:6 139:14	tomorrow 16:10 32:3	158:17
24 128:23 135:10	thinking 33:9 128:28	99:2	type 12:5 17:11 97:10
target 10:27 75:16 78:1	139:7	tool 94:16	113:9 148:20 149:19
145:14	third-party 16:20	tools 86:23 104:10	types 152:4 155:7
targeted 11:9 31:20,22	89:11 138:15 142:16	topic 11:21 34:4 55:5	typical 80:3
54:24 135:14	149:7,9,19,26,27 150:7	topics 70:24	Typically 17:8
targeting 100:23	thirty 119:26	total 12:15 20:15 24:18	U
126:17 146:28	thought 18:26 30:10,20	67:17,19,20 69:12,15,	UCAN's 123:25
team 17:9 36:7 61:5	59:10,12 74:26 88:21	18 84:25 85:14 101:13	
108:19 116:28 127:25	105:19 136:26	111:11 116:23 119:22	
teams 32:4	thoughts 18:14 29:12	120:20	
technical 15:5 76:17	37:20 105:15 125:4	totaling 132:26	
		totalling 88:3 159:2	

Uh-huh 15:24	utilities 8:3,8,23 10:4 15:11 25:18 27:18,19 28:19 30:16 36:25 39:11 47:16 48:13,15, 16,23 50:4,8 58:25 59:16 61:8 62:13 76:25 83:11 90:4 106:7,17 107:13,15 118:2 126:8, 15,16 129:3 130:17 136:7,13,26 138:8,9 149:14 150:13,15 151:6,22	validations 128:18	WATTS 84:17
ultimately 73:12	utilities' 43:19 60:14 75:8 131:12 153:21	Valley 8:7,9,27 9:12 13:5 35:27 51:16 52:27 56:1 57:22	Watts-zagha 8:13,20 9:3,5,7,9,11,27 10:8,12 14:4,25,27 17:24 19:2,9 23:1,22 27:10 28:16,25 30:27 35:11 38:11,12 39:2 42:25 47:3,6,13 50:12 51:7,12,13 52:5, 17 53:17,19 54:15,26 55:2 56:2,20,25 57:26 58:17,23 59:14,28 60:14,21 61:12,20 62:11,22 63:1,7,13,16, 18,20 64:5 68:26 77:23 80:12 89:26 90:2 91:10, 13,16 104:18 106:21 115:5,7 123:22,25,28 126:1 128:21,22 129:20 134:28 135:22 136:20, 27 138:22,23 139:28 140:25 141:6,27 142:28 143:1,18 145:7,13,26 146:11,14 147:4 148:2 149:23 150:8,17,23,28 151:13 152:6 154:22 156:13 158:1
unable 103:16 152:13	utility 8:4 10:24 15:13 16:18 18:15 21:18,19 23:9 27:23 34:6,8 38:18 91:18 112:7 120:17 126:22 128:24 129:19 130:14 137:4 144:24 145:2 152:17	Valley's 52:19,21	Watts-zagha's 135:21
uncertainty 154:18	utility's 88:26	variety 29:26	ways 121:8 157:18
understand 48:5,22 51:5 55:21,28 68:28 69:9,13 70:3 72:14,15 76:20 81:26 84:1 86:28 87:9,18 88:5 89:6 95:27 114:20 146:26 147:2 151:26	utilize 54:25 86:5,6	vendor 149:17	website 9:18 12:2 13:21 16:20 26:4,5 40:18 54:1 57:8 79:3 87:25 98:7 108:10,15 109:21 110:28 111:9 119:12 122:25 127:15 158:17
understanding 11:22, 27 12:3 13:26 15:10,17 16:28 24:28 26:28 50:3 56:10 57:9,20,23 71:15, 19 72:26 73:4 87:11 130:22 131:2 138:15 142:10,25 144:5	<hr/> v <hr/>	Ventura 112:12	week 20:11,13,14 66:24 80:23 83:24,26 89:23 110:23 111:27 117:1,17 120:1 123:10 127:7 132:1 159:4
understood 15:18 51:9,10 89:7		verbally 131:25	week's 69:27
unidentified 12:20 84:16 141:26		verification 76:22 129:17	weekly 27:13 28:11 32:27 66:16 84:9 96:8 102:2 123:7 138:20 154:25 157:27
uniform 105:5 140:24		verified 24:15,16 119:22 120:19 159:25	weeks 81:7 96:21 128:15 155:21
unique 78:21 80:7,9 93:25 131:20		verify 75:2 109:7 118:6 158:20,28	well-positioned 97:5
uniquely 130:1		verifying 159:24	whatnot 59:13
United 68:7,12,20 70:16,17 73:19 74:23 121:17 122:14		versus 117:21 121:14	wholeheartedly
universe 25:16		viable 139:20	
unmute 52:25 133:10		video 41:26 122:23	
unsure 109:26 113:25		video 41:26 122:23	
update 10:19 31:3 62:6 64:18 65:24 95:2,15,23 124:26 126:26,27 127:9,11,14 130:5,6 157:24		Vietnamese 115:18	
updated 68:11 154:16 157:26		virtual 104:20 152:11	
updates 9:13,20 11:16 62:12,14 64:15,16,19 66:2 68:28 133:2		voicemail 41:10	
updating 38:7		voicemails 111:13	
uploaded 83:9		<hr/> w <hr/>	
uptake 30:1		waiting 128:17 140:9	
		walk 9:19 10:14 19:25 57:10 77:28 116:12	
		walked 109:20	
		walking 57:6 107:1 129:4	
		wanted 40:19 54:13 75:9 87:9 89:6 91:27 93:11 96:6 104:22 107:1 136:25 140:3,5 141:27	
		Washington 21:8	
		water 47:16 61:8 64:25 103:9,12 107:13,14 112:7 126:16 129:13, 24,26 130:9,14,16,21, 24,27 131:10 152:3	

152:27	62:8 65:28 69:20 89:21
window 85:6 86:4,10 87:26 134:21	Youtube 122:20,28
wire 121:8,16	<hr/> Z <hr/>
witnesses 8:1 10:1 28:8 38:13 39:6 48:28 50:16 51:26 56:26 60:7, 15 61:21 63:8 75:8 91:19 126:23 133:4 145:17 146:20 152:7	Zagha 80:11 84:17 Zeller 123:26 126:3 zeros 11:3 zip 84:12
wondered 16:24	
wondering 60:9 66:7 71:16 82:9 96:19 144:14,22	
word 34:22	
wording 82:20	
work 13:22,23 20:6 25:18,19 41:19 42:8 43:11 47:8,15 57:21 64:15 65:11 69:25 70:18 73:12,15,21 93:20 94:21 100:3 104:6 116:3 117:23 120:12 134:21 137:8 143:24 154:10 158:19	
worked 43:8 71:2,4 75:19 107:5,7 120:9 144:10 157:4	
working 34:6 35:1,13 40:28 42:10,11 43:23 70:10,16 93:23 95:9 104:15,28 107:15 118:1 122:27 124:22 132:11, 17,21 142:10 146:12,15	
works 44:9 144:21	
worried 119:4	
worthy 25:20	
write 111:1	
written 127:13 141:20 142:1	
wrote 69:3	
<hr/> Y <hr/>	
years 20:25 22:6 25:6,7	
yesterday 9:12 40:28	