Ocean County
Board of Commissioners
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August 18, 2026

Mr. Brian X. Tierney, CEO
FirstEnergy Corp.
341 White Pond Drive
Akron, OH 44320

Mr. Ben Hertz-Shargel, President
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Mr. Tierney and President Hertz-Shargel:

On behalf of the residents of Ocean County, I am writing to express my strong opposition to Jersey Central Power & Light's proposed rate increase, which would result in an approximately **8.8% increase in residential electric bills beginning in 2028.**

I respectfully urge FirstEnergy and JCP&L to withdraw this proposal. If they do not, I urge the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to **reject not just the requested increase**, but any increase until at least 2030.

Ocean County residents have endured substantial increases in the cost of electricity and virtually every other essential household expense in recent years. Families, seniors living on fixed incomes and small businesses are already under significant financial pressure. Another major increase in electric rates is neither reasonable nor appropriate at this time.

This request is particularly difficult to reconcile with FirstEnergy's recent financial performance. From 2021 through 2025, FirstEnergy reported approximately **$4.8 billion in GAAP net income**, including more than **$1 billion in 2025 alone.**

Those profits demonstrate substantial financial strength. They also raise a fundamental question that I believe both FirstEnergy and the Board must consider: **Why should New Jersey ratepayers be required to absorb another significant increase before FirstEnergy has fully implemented its planned infrastructure improvements and demonstrated measurable benefits to the customers who are being asked to pay more?**

I am also concerned about the manner in which the proposal is being presented.

The decision to delay the residential impact of the proposed increase until 2028 has been portrayed as relief for customers. But postponing a rate increase does not eliminate it. A family, small business, or senior on a fixed income that cannot comfortably afford an additional increase today does not necessarily become able to afford that increase simply because it arrives a year later.

From the perspective of the residents I represent, delaying an 8.8% increase risks creating the appearance of consumer relief without meaningfully reducing the ultimate burden.

Ocean County ratepayers have paid enough.

I recognize that maintaining and modernizing the electric grid requires substantial investment. Ocean County continues to grow, and reliable electrical infrastructure is critically important to our residents, businesses, health-care facilities, schools, public safety agencies and overall economy.

In that regard, I am grateful that JCP&L and FirstEnergy have begun to publicly recognize the critical need for significant infrastructure and reliability investments in Ocean County. As you know, I strongly support those investments and believe they should continue—and, where necessary, accelerate.

However, investment in the grid should not automatically translate into approval of another substantial residential rate increase.

Infrastructure investment should come first. Measurable improvements in service and reliability should follow. Only then should customers be asked to shoulder any increase.

Before Ocean County residents are required to pay substantially more, they should see clear and documented evidence of:

- improved system reliability;
- fewer and shorter outages;
- enhanced storm resiliency;
- upgraded substations, transmission and distribution equipment;
- faster restoration following outages; and
- measurable improvements in customer service and system performance.

For these reasons, I believe a different approach is warranted.

I am calling on FirstEnergy and JCP&L to support a **moratorium on additional residential base-rate increases through at least 2030**, while planned infrastructure and grid-modernization projects are implemented and their effectiveness can be evaluated.

I am likewise asking the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, in its review of this rate case, to carefully consider the cumulative financial burden already imposed upon JCP&L customers and to **reject any increase until the aforementioned investments are made and proven to have a measurable benefit for ratepayers.**

The Board's review should consider not simply whether particular expenditures are recoverable under traditional utility ratemaking principles, but whether the overall proposed increase is fair and reasonable in light of FirstEnergy's profitability, the cumulative increases already experienced by customers and the company's ability to invest in its system without immediately shifting additional costs to residential ratepayers.

FirstEnergy's financial strength should enable the company to assume a greater portion of the near-term responsibility for improving its system before returning to customers for another substantial increase.

That does not mean infrastructure expenditures should go unrecovered indefinitely. It means ratepayers deserve a reasonable period of stability while the company carries out the investments it has already identified as necessary.

During a rate moratorium, FirstEnergy and JCP&L should continue to invest aggressively in the New Jersey electric system and provide transparent, publicly available reporting on the progress and effectiveness of those investments in Ocean County.

Residents should be able to determine where infrastructure dollars are being spent, which facilities are being upgraded, what reliability improvements have resulted, and whether outage frequency and duration are actually declining.

I believe the BPU should also consider establishing measurable performance benchmarks associated with major infrastructure investments so that future rate requests can be evaluated not only by how much money a utility has spent, but by **what customers received in return for that spending**.

That is particularly important for a regulated monopoly.

Electricity is an essential public necessity. JCP&L customers cannot simply choose another electric distribution company if they believe rates have become excessive or service has failed to meet expectations. That lack of consumer choice creates an enhanced obligation on both the utility and its regulator to protect affordability and ensure accountability.

Ocean County is home to a substantial population of retirees and residents living on fixed incomes, as well as working families and small businesses already facing rapidly rising costs. An 8.8% increase is not merely a percentage on a regulatory filing. It represents another recurring household expense for residents who have little ability to avoid it, and a very difficult time affording it with everything else that goes along with living and working in one of the nation's highest taxed states.

Accordingly, I respectfully request the following:

1. **That FirstEnergy and JCP&L withdraw the proposed residential rate increase;**
2. **That, absent such action by the company, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities reject the proposed 8.8% residential increase;**
3. **That FirstEnergy and JCP&L commit to a moratorium on additional residential base-rate increases through at least 2030;**
4. **That infrastructure, reliability and grid-resiliency investments in Ocean County continue and, where warranted, accelerate during that period;**
5. **That JCP&L publicly report measurable reliability outcomes associated with those investments, including outage frequency, outage duration, restoration times and infrastructure improvements; and**
6. **That any future request for additional residential rate increases be evaluated against measurable evidence that customers have received improved service, reliability and resiliency from the investments they have already funded.**

The people of Ocean County understand that maintaining a safe and reliable electric system costs money. They are not asking FirstEnergy to stop investing. They are asking for fairness, accountability and a reasonable period of relief from repeated increases.

A company that has generated approximately $4.8 billion in net income over five years should be in a position to invest aggressively in its infrastructure while exercising restraint in seeking additional revenue from residential customers.

And a regulatory system charged with protecting the public interest should demand compelling evidence before requiring those customers to pay substantially more.

Simply postponing a major increase until 2028 is not sufficient.

Ocean County ratepayers have paid enough.

Mr. Tierney, I respectfully ask FirstEnergy to reconsider this request and demonstrate its commitment to the communities it serves by investing first and seeking additional revenue later.

President Hertz-Shargel, I respectfully ask the Board to give substantial weight to affordability, cumulative rate impacts, FirstEnergy's financial condition and the measurable benefits received by customers as it reviews this proceeding—and to reject the proposed increase.

Ocean County stands ready to engage constructively with FirstEnergy, JCP&L and the Board on ways to strengthen our electric infrastructure while protecting residents from unreasonable additional costs.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Frank Sadeghi
Commissioner Director
Ocean County Board of Commissioners