**BEFORE THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**
**STATE OF GEORGIA**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **IN RE:** | ) | |
| | ) | **Docket No. 15296** |
| **SERVICE QUALITY STANDARDS FOR** | ) | |
| **CERTIFICATED MARKETERS AND THE** | ) | |
| **REGULATED PROVIDER** | ) | |

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## SCANA ENERGY MARKETING, LLC'S (DEREGULATED) PETITION FOR WAIVER OF THE CALL CENTER SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2022 AND JANUARY 2023

Now comes SCANA Energy Marketing, LLC ("SCANA"), and pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1(c), petitions the Commission to waive the Call Center Service Quality Level Standard for the months of November and December 2022 and January 2023. In support of its petition, SCANA shows the Commission the following:

1. By Order entered April 14, 2003 in Docket No. 15296-U ("Benchmark Order"), the Commission established service quality standards for certificated marketers as contemplated by Commission Rule 515-7-8-.03. The service quality standard for call center response time (referred to in the Benchmark Order as "Call Center Service Level") is 80% of all calls answered within 180 seconds of the customer's request to speak with an agent measured over one calendar month.

2. On October 10, 2022 (the "Transition Date"), SCANA transitioned to a new billing system. Over the long-term, SCANA's new billing system will provide many benefits for SCANA customers and further the innovative purposes embodied by Georgia's Natural Gas Competition and Deregulation Act, O.C.G.A. § 46-4-150 *et seq*.

3. After this Transition Date, SCANA experienced a) double the normal customer call volume and b) SCANA's Customer Solutions Specialists spent more time than normal with customers going over the new bill and setting up their new online account. Additionally, cold temperatures

during mid-October impacted SCANA's call volume. Therefore, for its deregulated service, SCANA's Call Center Service Level will be reported as being well below the Call Center Service Level set forth in the Benchmark Order for the October 2022 Service Quality Measure reporting period.

4. The Benchmark Order provides that "a marketer will begin the remediation process if it fails to meet the benchmark twice during any 12-month period." Benchmark Order at p. 5. Based on its experience for October 2022, SCANA anticipates a continuation of the increase in consumer calls and queue times for the November and December 2022 and January 2023 Service Quality Measure reporting periods due to the implementation of the new billing system and the winter heating season. Therefore, while SCANA is diligently working toward meeting the requirements of the Benchmark Order, SCANA is unlikely to meet the Call Center Service Level for November 2022, December 2022, and/or January 2023. Unless a waiver is granted as requested hereby, a failure for any one of these reporting periods would require SCANA to create and file a Remedial Action Plan and, ninety days later, file a Remediation Report as contemplated by the Benchmark Order.

5. The rule waiver requested by SCANA is from Commission Rule 515-7-8-.03 which states:

> "Every Marketer shall be required to meet service quality standards to ensure that quality service is afforded to all natural gas customers in Georgia. Specifically, all Marketers shall meet Commission established benchmarks in the following areas:
>
> a. Call Center Service Level"

The Call Center Service Level as set forth in the Benchmark Order requires that 80% of all calls to the call center be answered within 180 seconds of a request to speak with an agent, measured over one calendar month.

6. The Commission is authorized to grant a "waiver to a rule when a person subject to that rule demonstrates that the purpose of the underlying statute upon which the rule is based can be or has been achieved by other specific means which are agreeable to the person seeking the…waiver and that strict application of the rule would create a substantial hardship to such person." O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1(c). "Substantial hardship" is defined to mean "a significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of hardship to the person requesting…a waiver which impairs the ability of the person to continue to function in the regulated practice or business." O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1(b)(1).

7. The waiver of the Commission Rule 515-7-8-.03 and the Call Center Service Level set forth in the Benchmark Order meets the criteria of O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1(c). Specifically, if SCANA proceeded without such waiver it would create a substantial hardship, since the likelihood exists that SCANA will not meet the Call Center Service Level set forth in the Benchmark Order in the November 2022, December 2022 and/or the January 2023 reporting periods—resulting in the substantial burden of implementing and complying with the remediation process contemplated by the Benchmark Order. Moreover, if triggered, this remediation process set forth in the Benchmark Order places SCANA in additional jeopardy of facing substantial penalties over the next 15 months. The above rule waiver for the reporting periods of November and December 2022 and January 2023 sought herein allows SCANA to appropriately respond to the implementation of its new billing system and spend whatever time is required to discuss with consumers the changes made and the reasons for those changes without being limited by its significant concerns associated with the substantial hardships associated with the remediation process established by the Benchmark Order. As well, the industry is entering a particularly challenging winter heating season where natural gas prices and customer bills are expected to be significantly higher than in

previous years. SCANA expects that these issues will also drive increased call volumes to customer call centers in addition to the customer calls generated by changes to its billing system and online account platform. Lastly, SCANA has not previously requested a waiver of the Call Center Service Level or any other portion of the Benchmark Order.

Wherefore, SCANA respectfully requests that the Commission grant its request for a waiver of the Call Center Service Level for November and December 2022 and January 2023.

Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of November, 2022.

**HALL BOOTH SMITH, P.C.**

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## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the within and foregoing SCANA ENERGY MARKETING, LLC'S (DEREGULATED) PETITION FOR WAIVER OF THE CALL CENTER SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2022 AND JANUARY 2023 via electronic means and/or by United States Mail, properly addressed with adequate postage affixed thereto, upon the following as reflected:

Sallie Tanner, Executive Secretary
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

Ms. Nancy Tyer
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street SW
Atlanta, GA 30344

This 2nd day of November 2022.

**HALL BOOTH SMITH, P.C.**

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