

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO**

\* \* \* \* \*

IN THE MATTER OF ADVICE NO. 993- )  
GAS OF PUBLIC SERVICE )  
COMPANY OF COLORADO TO )  
REVISE ITS COLORADO PUC NO. 6- )  
GAS TARIFF TO INCREASE )  
JURISDICTIONAL BASE RATE )  
REVENUES, IMPLEMENT NEW BASE ) PROCEEDING NO. 22AL-\_\_\_\_G  
RATES FOR ALL GAS RATE )  
SCHEDULES, AND MAKE OTHER )  
PROPOSED TARIFF CHANGES )  
EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 24, 2022 )

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ANDREW R. HAWKINS**

**ON**

**BEHALF OF**

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF COLORADO**

**January 24, 2022**

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OF THE STATE OF COLORADO**

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**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ANDREW R. HAWKINS**

**I. INTRODUCTION, QUALIFICATIONS AND PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY**

**Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

A. My name is Andrew R. Hawkins. My business address is 3115 Centre Pointe Drive, Roseville, Minnesota.

**Q. BY WHOM ARE YOU EMPLOYED AND IN WHAT POSITION?**

A. I am employed by Xcel Energy Services Inc. ("XES") as Supervisor of Energy Assistance Programs. XES is a wholly owned subsidiary of Xcel Energy Inc. ("Xcel Energy") and provides an array of support services to Public Service Company of Colorado ("Public Service" or the "Company") and the other utility operating company subsidiaries of Xcel Energy on a coordinated basis.

1   **Q.    ON WHOSE BEHALF ARE YOU TESTIFYING IN THE PROCEEDING?**

2   A.    I am testifying on behalf of Public Service.

3   **Q.    PLEASE SUMMARIZE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS.**

4   A.    As the Supervisor of Energy Assistance Programs, I am responsible for managing  
5       the bill payment assistance programs offered by Xcel Energy. My duties include  
6       managing an operations team that administers the Electric Affordability Program  
7       ("EAP") and Gas Affordability Program ("GAP"). These programs provide payment  
8       assistance to households who received assistance during the current or most  
9       recent heating seasons from the Colorado Low-Income Energy Assistance  
10      Program ("LEAP"). A description of my qualifications, duties, and responsibilities  
11      is set forth after the conclusion of my Direct Testimony in my Statement of  
12      Qualifications.

13   **Q.    WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?**

14   A.    The primary purpose of my Direct Testimony is to provide an overview of the  
15      Company's GAP, including program, participation, and funding information. As  
16      other forms of bill payment assistance are also available to our customers, I further  
17      discuss the Company's coordination with other entities regarding utility bill  
18      payment assistance and other resources available to the Company's customers  
19      seeking help with their natural gas bills. I also discuss the newly created Energy  
20      Assistance Charge, which went into effect October 1, 2021.

1 **II. PUBLIC SERVICE'S GAP**

2 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION OF YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?**

3 A. In this section of my Direct Testimony, I describe the GAP Public Service offers  
4 along with eligibility and participation information.

5 **A. GAP Overview**

6 **Q. PLEASE PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMPANY'S GAP.**

7 A. The Public Service GAP is a customer-funded energy assistance program  
8 administered and supervised by Public Service pursuant to Colorado Public  
9 Utilities Commission ("Commission") rules and the Company's GAP Tariff.<sup>1</sup> The  
10 GAP is available to Residential customers who are qualified for and receive  
11 assistance from the Colorado Low-Income Energy Assistance Program ("LEAP")  
12 during the federal fiscal year ("Program Year"), which runs from November through  
13 October.

14 As I explain in more detail below, the Company's GAP is intended to provide  
15 supplemental assistance to households that have a high energy burden and the  
16 lowest incomes, covering a portion of energy bills beyond what LEAP covers. The  
17 GAP is designed so customers who are enrolled can stay connected and stay on  
18 the program with the intent to make a payment towards their utility bills and also  
19 reduce the arrears for the customer and Company.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rule 4412 "Gas Service Low-Income Program" and the Company's Colo. PUC No. 6 - Gas Tariff ("Gas Tariff") at Sheet Nos. 34 – 34E (the "GAP Tariff").

1   **Q.   PLEASE ELABORATE ON THE BENEFITS AVAILABLE UNDER THE**  
2   **COMPANY'S GAP FOR ELIGIBLE CUSTOMERS.**

3   A.   The Company's GAP provides two kinds of assistance: (1) affordability options;  
4       and (2) arrearage forgiveness. A GAP customer's payment schedule includes both  
5       payment of their current month's bill after inclusion of the monthly affordability bill  
6       credit, and payment of a portion of the qualified customer's pre-GAP arrears, if  
7       any.

8               With respect to the GAP affordability options, customers can receive a  
9       monthly bill credit through a percentage of income average monthly budget plan  
10      or a discount on their monthly bill, depending on the household's consumption and  
11      income level. Customers with monthly income of zero dollars (\$0.00) must pay 10  
12      dollars per month towards their current bill, and benefits under the GAP  
13      affordability options cannot be less than five dollars per month.

14             Separately, under the arrearage forgiveness components of the GAP, the  
15      qualified customer can receive assistance in retiring pre-GAP arrears through  
16      either a monthly credit or a one-time credit, as permitted by the GAP Tariff. For  
17      example, if the qualifying customer is in arrears for \$200 or less, the Company can  
18      provide a one-time arrearage forgiveness credit for the outstanding amount. If the  
19      customer is in arrears for more than \$200, the Company will place them on a  
20      payment arrangement for up to 24 months and retire the arrears that do not fit into  
21      that payment arrangement term as permitted by the GAP Tariff.

**Q. WHAT IS THE CURRENTLY APPROVED GAP FUNDING LEVEL?**

A. On April 5, 2020, Public Service implemented tariffs that went into effect by operation of law to increase the annual GAP funding level by \$1,900,000, bringing the currently approved GAP funding level up to \$5,000,000 per year.

**Q. HOW IS THE GAP FUNDED?**

A. The GAP provides assistance to Residential customers but is recovered from all customer classes. Table ARH-D-1 shows the current monthly GAP adder included within the Company's S&F charges for the major customer rate schedules:

**TABLE ARH-D-1: GAP Rates**

<b>Customer Class</b>	<b>GAP Rate (Part of S&amp;F Charge)</b>
Schedule RG (Residential)	\$0.21
Schedule CSG (Small Commercial Sales)	\$0.88
Schedule CLG (Large Commercial Sales)	\$14.15
Schedule IG (Interruptible Sales)	\$33.86
Schedule TFS (Small Transport)	\$0.88
Schedule TFL (Large Transport)	\$14.15
Schedule TI (Interruptible Transport)	\$33.86

This level of funding generally allows the Company to provide GAP benefits to approximately 30,000 customers per year.

1 **Q. HOW MUCH HAS THE COMPANY DISBURSED UNDER GAP SINCE**  
2 **PROGRAM INCEPTION AS PART OF A PILOT LAUNCHED IN 2009?**

3 A. As I discuss later in my Direct Testimony, the Company provides utility bill  
4 assistance to thousands of customers annually through the GAP. From 2009  
5 (when an EAP/GAP pilot was started), through the end of the Program year ending  
6 October 2021, the Company has disbursed a total of \$38,387,551 to GAP  
7 participants.

8 **B. GAP Eligibility and Participation**

9 **Q. DOES THE STATE LEAP OFFICE DETERMINE IF A CUSTOMER QUALIFIES**  
10 **FOR LEAP?**

11 A. Yes. The State LEAP Office,<sup>2</sup> not the Company, verifies a customer's income for  
12 purposes of LEAP qualification. The State LEAP Office then provides a LEAP  
13 payment file (the "LEAP File") to Public Service. Thus, the Company only knows  
14 the number of customers who have qualified for and received energy assistance  
15 through LEAP based on information provided directly to the Company by the State  
16 LEAP Office. While Public Service reviews a customer's LEAP File for purposes  
17 of enrolling customers in bill assistance programs, the Company does not  
18 independently track, collect, or verify income information for its customers and  
19 does not know the total number of customers within its service territory that would  
20 qualify for LEAP.

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<sup>2</sup> The "State LEAP Office" is the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Low-income Energy Assistance.



1           As discussed above, once customers are identified by the State LEAP  
2           Office as qualified for and having received LEAP assistance (in the LEAP File),  
3           they are eligible for the GAP. I also note that the Commission currently is  
4           conducting a rulemaking (Proceeding No. 21R-0326EG) evaluating eligibility  
5           criteria for energy assistance programs.

6   **Q.   WHAT ARE THE FORMS OF ASSISTANCE THE COMPANY PROVIDES**  
7   **UNDER THE GAP?**

8   A.   The Company provides three kinds of assistance under the GAP: (1) the  
9           Percentage of Income Payment Plan ("PIPP") Affordability option; (2) Step Bill  
10          Discount ("SBD") Affordability option; and (3) arrearage forgiveness.

11 **Q.   PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PIPP AFFORDABILITY OPTION.**

12 A.   The PIPP Affordability option consists of a bill credit determined as one-twelfth of  
13          the difference between the Company's estimate of the customer's annual gas bill  
14          and three percent of the customer's annual household income as provided in the  
15          LEAP File. The Company makes this calculation based on the customer's energy  
16          usage and bills, as well as the income information provided in the LEAP File.

17 **Q.   WHAT CUSTOMERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE PIPP AFFORDABILITY**  
18 **OPTION?**

19 A.   The PIPP Affordability option is available for customers who have a high energy  
20          burden, which for GAP purposes means that the customer's annual bills for natural  
21          gas service are three percent or more of their annual income, as disclosed in the  
22          LEAP File.

1   **Q.   PLEASE DESCRIBE THE SBD AFFORDABILITY OPTION.**

2   A.   The SBD Affordability option discounts the customer's bill at standard Residential  
3       rates by 20 percent or 25 percent based on the household's consumption and  
4       income level.

5   **Q.   WHAT CUSTOMERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SBD AFFORDABILITY**  
6       **OPTION?**

7   A.   The SBD Affordability option is available to customers whose bills as a percentage  
8       of income are less than the three percent of income required by the PIPP  
9       Affordability option. The SBD option is offered to customers meeting at least one  
10      of the following criteria: (1) A household income at or below 185 percent of the  
11      current federal poverty level ("FPL"), or (2) a household income at or below the  
12      percent of the FPL for the current Program Year set by the Colorado Department  
13      of Human Services, Division of Low-income Energy Assistance for eligibility in the  
14      LEAP program.

15   **Q.   PLEASE DESCRIBE THE ARREARAGE COMPONENTS OF THE GAP.**

16   A.   The PIPP arrearage forgiveness component consists of a monthly credit that will  
17      be applied each month after receipt of the customer's payment. Payments under  
18      the PIPP arrearage forgiveness component cannot exceed one percent of the  
19      customer's annual income. The credit will be designed to retire pre-program  
20      arrears over a period of 12 months for customers with arrears of 500 dollars or less  
21      and 24 months for customers with arrears of more than 500 dollars.

1           The SBD Arrearage Forgiveness component consists of a one-time credit  
2           of up to 200 dollars that will be applied to the customer's arrears. SBD participants  
3           are not required to repay this SBD arrearage credit.

4   **Q.   HOW ARE ELIGIBLE CUSTOMER ENROLLED IN THE GAP PROGRAM?**

5   A.   Eligible customers are auto-enrolled (no application needed) into the GAP program  
6           when the Company is notified that a customer has enrolled in LEAP. The  
7           Company relies on the income information presented in the customer's LEAP File,  
8           and the current LEAP income eligibility guidelines, in order to evaluate customers  
9           for GAP eligibility and to calculate a customer's benefit. Currently, Colorado LEAP  
10          income eligibility guidelines are 60 percent of state median income, which  
11          translates to approximately 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Pursuant to  
12          the GAP Tariff, as the Colorado LEAP income guidelines change, the Company  
13          uses those updated income guidelines to determine eligibility for the GAP.

14   **Q.   ARE CUSTOMERS NOTIFIED OF THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR GAP?**

15   A.   Yes. Eligible customers are notified via an enrollment welcome letter and given  
16          the option to opt out if they do not want to participate. LEAP participants who do  
17          not qualify for assistance under the Company's GAP are also notified of their  
18          ineligibility by letter. The Company reviews LEAP enrollment data annually to  
19          ensure that customers are continually eligible for the GAP program from year to  
20          year.

1 **Q. ARE GAP BENEFITS PROVIDED ALL YEAR ROUND OR JUST DURING**  
2 **HEATING SEASON?**

3 A. GAP benefits are provided all year round, not just during heating season.

4 **Q. HOW MUCH IN LEAP AND GAP ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED TO PUBLIC**  
5 **SERVICE CUSTOMERS DURING PROGRAM YEAR ENDING OCTOBER 2020**  
6 **AND PROGRAM YEAR ENDING OCTOBER 2021?**

7 A. Tables ARH-D-2 and ARH-D-3 below provide the Company's LEAP and GAP  
8 participant information and dollars distributed for Program Year ending October  
9 2020 and Program Year ending October 2021.

10 **TABLE ARH-D-2: Company LEAP Data**

<b>Data</b>	<b>Program Year 2020</b>	<b>Program Year 2021</b>
LEAP Participant #	44,021	53,067
LEAP Benefits total	\$34,435,238	\$21,487,976

11 **Table ARH-D-3: Company GAP Data**

<b>Data</b>	<b>Program Year 2020</b>	<b>Program Year 2021</b>
GAP Participant #	30,012	33,853
GAP Benefits Total	\$4,085,658	\$3,812,084

1                   **III. COORDINATION AND OTHER AVAILABLE UTILITY BILL**  
2                   **PAYMENT ASSISTANCE**

3   **Q.     WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION OF YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?**

4   A.     In this section of my Direct Testimony, I describe Public Service's coordination with  
5           other entities in providing its customers with assistance on their utility bills, and  
6           also discuss some of the other assistance available to our customers.

7   **Q.     DOES THE COMPANY COORDINATE WITH LEAP AND ENERGY OUTREACH**  
8           **COLORADO REGARDING ITS GAP?**

9   A.     Yes. For example, the Company hosts an annual event with the LEAP agencies<sup>3</sup>  
10          and Energy Outreach Colorado ("EOC") to review the upcoming energy assistance  
11          season and to discuss the bill payment assistance programs with LEAP and EOC  
12          staff. Additionally, the Company attends a monthly meeting hosted by the  
13          Colorado Department of Human Services attended by LEAP county agencies, the  
14          State LEAP office, and other community stakeholders to discuss current funding  
15          and policy implications related to energy assistance and our customers. Quarterly,  
16          the Company participates in an action committee along with the state LEAP office,  
17          EOC, Colorado Energy Office, Staff of the Commission, and other utilities to review  
18          income qualified programs administered by the utilities and any updates related to  
19          LEAP. Public Service also participates in the EOC fall training where aspects of  
20          the GAP are discussed with Staff of the Commission.

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<sup>3</sup> LEAP agencies include county agencies that administer LEAP for the State LEAP Office.

1 **Q. ARE LEAP AND GAP THE ONLY SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE FOR**  
2 **CUSTOMERS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY WITH THEIR UTILITY BILLS?**

3 A. No. There are other sources of assistance available to customers, including, but  
4 not limited to, the Emergency Rental Assistance program and the Homeowner  
5 Assistance program. Each of these programs include features that provide  
6 assistance for the payment of utility bills.<sup>4</sup>

7 The Emergency Rental Assistance program makes available funding to  
8 assist households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19  
9 pandemic. The funds are provided by the Federal government directly to states,  
10 U.S. Territories, local governments, and Indian tribes. Grantees use the funds to  
11 aid eligible households through existing or newly created rental assistance  
12 programs. Utilities and home energy costs are separately stated charges related  
13 to the occupancy of rental property. Accordingly, utilities and home energy costs  
14 include separately stated electricity, gas, water and sewer, trash removal, and  
15 energy costs, such as fuel oil. Payments to public utilities are also permitted.

16 The purpose of the Homeowner Assistance Fund ("HAF") is to prevent  
17 mortgage delinquencies and defaults, foreclosures, loss of utilities or home energy  
18 services, and displacement of homeowners experiencing financial hardship after  
19 January 21, 2020. Funds from the HAF may be used for assistance with mortgage  
20 payments, homeowner's insurance, utility payments, and other specified

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<sup>4</sup> While the Company is aware of the additional funds that are available to customers through the Emergency Rental and Homeowner Assistance programs, we do not have information on the total amount of utility bill assistance in dollars or the percentage of the total program funding for Colorado.

1 purposes. Federal law prioritizes funds for homeowners who have experienced the  
2 greatest hardships, leveraging local and national income indicators to maximize  
3 the impact.

4 **Q. HAVE ANY OF THESE PROGRAMS BEEN ENHANCED IN ORDER TO HELP**  
5 **CUSTOMERS WITH UTILITY PAYMENTS DURING THE COVID-19**  
6 **PANDEMIC?**

7 A. Yes. Each of these programs was significantly increased as part of the American  
8 Rescue Plan Act of 2021.<sup>5</sup> For example, LIHEAP received an additional \$4.5  
9 billion<sup>6</sup> (on top of a \$3.75 billion appropriation for fiscal year 2021),<sup>7</sup> the Emergency  
10 Rental Assistance program received an additional \$21.5 billion<sup>8</sup> (on top of \$25  
11 billion appropriation for fiscal year 2021) and the HAF received approximately \$10  
12 billion.<sup>9</sup> While funds from these programs are used throughout the United States  
13 and are not only for the payment of utility bills, there has been a significant  
14 commitment on behalf of the Federal government to make resources available to  
15 those struggling with utility bills.

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<sup>5</sup> Pub. L. 117-2, available at <https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr1319/BILLS-117hr1319enr.pdf> [hereinafter American Rescue Plan Act].

<sup>6</sup> American Rescue Plan Act, § 2911. “LIHEAP” refers to the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

<sup>7</sup> Combined, the 2021 appropriations are significantly higher than prior LIHEAP appropriations. See [https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/energyprogs\\_hist.htm](https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/energyprogs_hist.htm).

<sup>8</sup> American Rescue Plan Act, § 3201.

<sup>9</sup> American Rescue Plan Act, § 3206.

1 **Q. ARE YOU AWARE OF OTHER FORMS OF UTILITY BILL PAYMENT**  
2 **ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THE COMPANY'S CUSTOMERS?**

3 A. Yes. The State of Colorado recently passed legislation that creates another source  
4 of funding for energy assistance programs and energy retrofits provided to low-  
5 income households. House Bill 21-1105 directs utilities to collect a monthly fee  
6 from electric and natural gas customers to further support the work of organizations  
7 that help customers in need. As of October 1, 2021, certain Public Service  
8 customers have a new line item on their bills called the Energy Assistance  
9 Charge.<sup>10</sup> From October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022, each customer's monthly  
10 Energy Assistance Charge is 50 cents for electric service provided and 50 cents  
11 for natural gas service provided. The Energy Assistance Charge is scheduled to  
12 increase to 75 cents beginning October 1, 2022 and then will adjust each October  
13 1 thereafter based on the Consumer Price Index – Denver-Aurora-Lakewood  
14 unless repealed.

15 **Q. WHICH CUSTOMERS PAY THE GAS ENERGY ASSISTANCE CHARGE?**

16 A. The Gas Energy Assistance Charge is paid by all customers except: (1) non-  
17 metered and gas transportation Rate Schedules RGL, CGL, TI, TFS, TFL, TI-FRP,  
18 TF-FRP; (2) customers who received assistance from the current or most recent

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<sup>10</sup> The Company filed proposed Electric and Natural Gas tariffs in Proceeding Nos. 21AL-0403E and 21AL-0405G to implement the Energy Assistance Charge. Those tariff changes were authorized to take effect by operation of law on October 1, 2021. The Commission currently is engaged in a rulemaking (Proceeding No. 21R-0326EG) examining the Commission's rules regarding assistance programs, including implementation of House Bill 21-1105.



1 heating seasons from LEAP; and (3) customers who request to opt-out of payment  
2 of the Energy Assistance Charge.

3 **Q. WHO RECEIVES THE FUNDS COLLECTED THROUGH THE ENERGY ASSISTANCE**  
4 **CHARGE?**

5 A. Energy Assistance Charge funds are provided to EOC, with EOC maintaining a  
6 portion of the Energy Assistance Charge funds for bill payment assistance and  
7 energy efficiency services and allocating a portion of such funds to the Colorado  
8 Energy Office for its weatherization assistance program.

9 **Q. HOW DOES EOC PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE COMPANY'S**  
10 **CUSTOMERS?**

11 A. EOC provides direct energy bill assistance payments to utility customers using a  
12 network of around 100 nonprofit partner agencies. EOC provides bill payment  
13 assistance to households across Colorado who are behind on their energy bills  
14 and are at risk of not having home energy. Payments are made directly to a local  
15 utility or fuel company. Bill payment assistance is provided through EOC's network  
16 of local resource centers, faith-based organizations, healthcare providers and  
17 social services agencies.

18 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?**

19 A. Yes.

**Statement of Qualifications**

**Andrew R. Hawkins**

Andrew Hawkins is the Supervisor of Energy Assistance Programs at Xcel Energy. In this role, he manages a team that provides bill payment resources and assistance to income-qualified households and social service agencies within Xcel Energy's service territories in Colorado and Minnesota.

Mr. Hawkins collaborates with individuals and other groups such as regulatory and government organizations, community action agencies and nonprofits to secure and administer funds for income-qualified households' energy bills.

Mr. Hawkins graduated from Metropolitan State University's College of Management with a Bachelor of Science degree in Management Information Systems and has been with Xcel Energy for 20 years.

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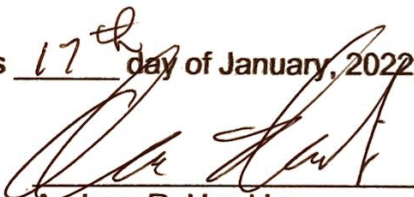
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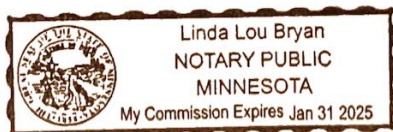
I, Andrew R. Hawkins, being duly sworn, state that the Direct Testimony was prepared by me or under my supervision, control, and direction; that the Direct Testimony is true and correct to the best of my information, knowledge and belief; and that I would give the same testimony orally and would present the same attachments if asked under oath.

Dated at Blaine, Minnesota, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2022.



Andrew R. Hawkins  
Supervisor of Energy Assistance Programs

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 17<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2022.



Lou  
Linda Lou Bryan  
Notary Public

My Commission expires 1-31-2025