

Draft meeting notes

Wednesday April, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

In-person at State Personnel Board Auditorium 801 Capitol Mall Sacramento, CA 95814

Virtual via Webex

Board Member Attendance:

Present: Shiroma, Delgado-Olson, Stamas, Tang, Castaneda, Watts, Irwin, Bierman, Medina, Castilone

Absent: None

Meeting Presentations: <https://liob.cpuc.ca.gov/previous-liob-meetings/> .

Please note: Agenda Items are listed in the order in which they were discussed. Some items were discussed out of numerical order.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Board Chair Delgado-Olson opened the meeting of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) at approximately 10:00 AM. Other Board Member introductions followed, along with California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) staff introductions. Commissioner Shiroma provided opening remarks, noting the Board's 20-year celebration, the Bagley-Keene relationship between herself and Commissioner Karen Douglas, and both her and Commissioner Douglas's staff. Speaking to the meeting agenda, Commissioner Shiroma highlighted the Senate Bill 1208 report update.

2. Approval of the December 12, 2022, Meeting Minutes – Action Item

Board Member Medina moved to approve the [minutes from the December meeting](#) and Board Member Castaneda seconded the motion. The LIOB approved the minutes unanimously.

3. Election of the LIOB Chair and LIOB Vice-Chair –Action Item

Gillian Weaver from the CPUC's Energy Division (ED) read from the LIOB charter relevant to Chair and Vice-Chair elections, which states that each position is elected annually to serve a one-year term. Board Member Castaneda spoke to Board Chair Delgado-Olson's leadership and nominated him for another term as Chair. Board Member Castaneda also nominated Vice-Chair Stamas for another term. Commissioner Shiroma seconded the motion. The election of Benito Delgado-Olson to LIOB Chair and Maria Stamas to Vice-Chair was passed unanimously by the board.

4. Public Comment

Dr. Michelle Engel-Silva, the CEO of Proteus Inc., provided public comment by introducing herself and her organization. Dr. Engel-Silva spoke of the work that Proteus does in the Central Valley region.

Eugene Ayuyao of Southern California Edison (SCE) addressed the board to inform them of the passing of Jack Parkhill, a member of the Southern California energy assistance network. Board Members Castaneda and Watts, Board Chair Delgado-Olson, and Commissioner Shiroma spoke of Mr. Parkhill's contributions.

Board Member Medina used this portion of the agenda to comment on how low-income assistance programs, such as the Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) and California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) programs are marketed and administered to mobile home residents. Board Member Medina noted how those residents may be uniquely disadvantaged and their specific energy challenges.

5. Comment from Community Based Organizations

Vice-Chair Stamas then introduced Mark Hall from Revalue.io, an Oakland based energy efficiency project developer. Mr. Hall [presented on his organization](#) and their current work, updating from his presentation to the Board last March (2022).

Board Member Castaneda commented that there are challenges associated with electrification for ESA participants, however, organizations like Revalue.io could be a third-party bridge builder to help with these challenges. Mr. Hall responded affirmatively and noted their relationship with both investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and other government entities. Board Member Castaneda asked if these resources were available in the Central Valley. Mr. Hall answered that there is a network in the Central Valley, but the East Bay is where Revalue.io has the most resources.

Board Member Medina asked about the referral process, data collection on deferrals, and recommendations for program improvement. Mr. Hall responded by citing the messaging of the Green Healthy Homes initiative, which focuses on issues that residents may be more concerned about rather than solely focusing on energy usage.

Commissioner Shiroma asked about the income guidelines that they use. Mr. Hall answered that they use Area Median Income (180%) rather than Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPL).

Board Member Wimbley applauded Revalue.io's commitment to whole home solutions and spoke to other home remediation efforts. Board Member Wimbley asked what the most common type of deferral is, and what resources are available for certain deferrals. Mr. Hall answered that the most common is asbestos and Revalue.io had to expand their resources to meet that need. Revalue.io uses tech quick start grant funds from the CPUC and is long-term looking to leverage health care industry funds in the long term.

A member of the public asked about other types of deferrals, and Mr. Hall noted debris and pests as common issues, however, asbestos is the most common issue.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if the ESA program tracks deferrals. Board Member Castaneda noted that it is important to track deferral rates, especially considering the new program priorities.

6. Senate Bill 1208 Subcommittee Recommendations

Board Chair Delgado-Olson introduced this topic by summarizing Senate Bill 1208, which tasked the Low Income Oversight Board submit a report to the legislature regarding the opportunity in process for expanding the 3rd party administrator contract used for the Lifeline program or establishing a similar new contracts to include water, gas and electric, electric utility service for purposes. To meet the requirements of the bill, the LIOB created a SB 1208 subcommittee at the December 2022 meeting to work on the report. This subcommittee has met several times since January 2023 and prepared a list of recommendations for the full board to review at this quarterly meeting.

Board Member Castaneda then introduced Senator Ben Hueso, the lead author of Senate Bill 1208. Senator Hueso spoke to the intent of the bill, which was to bring together as many state assistance programs as possible into one application, in order to reach all eligible customers to make it easier for customers to apply.

Commissioner Shiroma noted the different income levels for different programs and how a universal application would help with that.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson, Board Member Castaneda, Board Member Medina, and Board Member Tang expressed their thoughts on the importance of this bill.

This agenda item was put on hold until after lunch.

After lunch, the SB 1208 subcommittee presented a [set of recommendations](#) to the board. Board Member Wimbley, Co-Chair of SB1208 Subcommittee, shared an overview of the recommendations.

Board Member Castaneda motioned for the Board to vote on the recommendations. Board Member Tang seconded. Board Members Delgado-Olson, Stamas, Tang, Castaneda, Watts, Irwin, Medina, and Castilone voted affirmatively. Commissioner Shiroma and Board Member Bierman abstained. After passing, these recommendations will be put into report form for submission to the legislature by June 30.

7. Subcommittee Reports

Board Member Castaneda provided a summary of the [March 16, 2023 subcommittee meeting](#) and spoke to the challenges in the ESA program. Board Member Castaneda noted the need for future subcommittee meetings to continue working on these issues, such as administrative

burdens for contractors. Board Chair Delgado-Olson responded that the Board could formalize lessons learned and recommendations for the program in some form before the next program cycle. Board Member Watts concurred with this idea.

For the Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) subcommittee, Board Chair Delgado-Olson explained that the subcommittee met two times in March 2023 to discuss a proposed topic for the 2025 study. After deciding on preferred and proposed topics, the subcommittee put together a [letter to send to the Commission](#). The recommended topic came from the subcommittee's review of energy burden and whether the current low income program are adequately meeting the need of burdened customers.

The Water & Climate Change subcommittee did not meet this quarter, however, members of this subcommittee prepared a letter for the Board to vote on with recommendations to the CPUC specific to data sharing. To provide context for these recommendations, staff from the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) presented on the [Low Income Household Water Assistance Program \(LIHWAP\) and opportunities for data sharing](#). The letter proposes a direct data match program between the Water utilities and CSD to allow for more streamlined disbursement of LIWAP funds.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked if there was any IOU feedback to this letter. Board Member Bierman said that she did not see any issues from the energy IOU perspective. Board Chair Delgado-Olson motioned to approve the letter and Board Member Medina seconded. Commissioner Shiroma abstained, with all other members voting affirmatively.

8. California Department of Community Services & Development Update

Board Member Wimbley provided a status update from the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) on the California Arrearage Payment Program (CAPP) and the Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP). Board Member Wimbley shared for the 2022 CAPP, the total disbursed funding was \$647 million. This relief covered 100% of the arrearage that occurred during period of March 2020 – December 2021. Going forward, one of the requirements of the CAPP program is that recipients are not disconnected for 90 days. For the 2022 CAPP, there were 9 IOUs and 24 public utilities that participated in the program.

CSD was appropriated budget at \$1.2 for the 2022 cap program, so, based on the amount of the \$647M that was dispersed, that left a balance of \$549M that was not dispersed to utilities. Because the program has fulfilled all of these administrative obligations, the remaining funds will be decided on in the budget or the budget process.

Board Member Medina responded that her household was one of the ones that received assistance, but that they still have had high bills that came after the end of the pandemic relief period. Board Member Medina also noted the extreme weather conditions, such as floods, that are displacing people. These unspent funds could be used for other assistance rather than being returned to the state legislature.

Board Member Wimbley responded by suggesting that the Board consider advocating for rates and keeping costs for customers more affordable. Board Vice-Chair Stamas agreed with this suggestion and said that the Legislative subcommittee should meet soon to consider a recommendation to the legislature to use the unspent CAPP funds for other customer needs. Board Member Castaneda expressed support for the creation of a new subcommittee to look at affordability specifically.

9. Joint Investor Owned Utilities Status Reports

A representative of each IOU presented a one slide summary for program status updates from their respective utility before Board Member discussion. [More information on low-income programs, as well as Public Safety Power Shut-offs \(PSPS\), disconnections, and arrearage management, was provided to the Board in advance.](#)

Board Member Castaneda expressed support for a barrier study and commented on the differences between IOUs on how they handle committed funds.

Board Member Medina talked about enrollment and marketing trends. SCE replied that they do various types of comarketing.

Commissioner Shiroma asked what the biggest hurdle to increasing Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) enrollment is. SDG&E and PG&E answered that this question was the reason that they wanted to do the barrier study, and that other reasons might be that they are categorically eligible for CARE, that there are way fewer customers eligible for CARE, and that there is self-certification. PG&E also shared that they have a pilot with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that has resulted in way more CARE enrollments over FERA.

Commissioner Shiroma agreed that the FERA eligible customer base is very small but would be interested in knowing if there are customer characteristics for FERA customers that could help identify them.

Commissioner Shiroma also spoke to the tribal grants and appreciated the IOUs for increasing the grant amount.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson commented that Section 8 housing uses Area Median Income (AMI), which may include some FERA eligible customers. SDG&E answered that the IOUs are also looking forward to the results of the Categorical Eligibility study coming this year.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked about the medial baseline program and asked if the question of whether a nurse practitioner can certify was resolved. PG&E answered that nurse practitioners can qualify customers and that they are working with regional centers to have more enrollment assistance.

The Board Chair also asked about generator opportunities for those displaced by flooding or weather, and who the best contacts would be for this.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about automatic enrollment based on income. PG&E answered that they don't have customer income to auto-enroll. Board Vice-Chair also asked about the difference between disconnections among IOUs and specifically why PG&E has more disconnections. PG&E answered that they started the disconnections process earlier than other utilities.

Board Member Wimbley asked how long the Arrearage Management Plan (AMP) program was authorized for. SCE answered that it is authorized indefinitely. Board Member Wimbley asked when the other IOUs would begin residential credit collections. SCE and SDG&E answered that they had begun already but would pause in compliance with the CAPP. Board Member Wimbley also expressed interest in knowing the difference between arrearages between pre and post pandemic levels. IOU staff generally responded that the arrearages are much more post pandemic, but that there are differences between different types of customers.

Board Member Irwin asked SoCalGas to share information on their tribal grants. SoCalGas replied that they are working on several memorandums of understanding with different amounts per tribes. Board Member Irwin also asked SDG&E the amount for their grants and they replied that they would have to follow up with this specific amount.

10. CPUC Standing Reports – Energy Division Update

Kapil Kulkarni, of the CPUC Energy Division, provided [an update on the large IOUs ESA/CARE/FERA program cycle, the LINA, and the Income-Graduated Fixed Charge Proceeding, Track A.](#)

Board Member Castilone recommended adding a link to the SOMAH program within the ESA pilot websites.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about Assembly Bill 205 and how low income was defined. Mr. Kulkarni answered that low income was not defined in legislation but left to the CPUC and the proceeding process to propose.

Board Member Castaneda asked if the public purpose programs surcharge was left intact by AB 205. Mr. Kulkarni answered affirmatively.

11. CPUC Standing Reports – Legislative Update

Amanda Singh, of the CPUC Office of Governmental Affairs, [reviewed active legislation that affects low income households and programs.](#)

Board Member Tang asked if the CPUC would be taking a public support position on any of these bills, and when that would happen. Ms. Singh answered that in order for the CPUC to take a public position on any bill, the Commission would have to vote. Before that happens, OGA would engage with legislature on specific bills.

12. CPUC Standing Reports - Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electric Services (CHANGES) Update

Ravinder Mangat of the CPUC's News & Outreach Division provided the [biannual update on the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electric Services \(CHANGES\) Program](#).

Casey McFall of Milestone Consulting LLC and Anni Chung of Self Help for Elderly were available to answer questions about the program.

13. Wrap Up & Closing Remarks

Board Vice-Chair Stamas provided brief closing remarks and noted that the Board would need to conclude for their 20th anniversary reception.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 PM.