

From: Emily Hammerstrom [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 7:54 PM
To: PUC-PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Docket EL26-003 Public Comment –Nate and Emily Hammerstrom

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

We are writing as long-time Black Hills Energy customers and residents of Sturgis, South Dakota, to respectfully oppose the proposed rate increase in Docket EL26-003.

Our household includes two working parents and five children. Even with both of us working full time, it's a challenge to keep up with the rising cost of living—groceries, fuel, insurance, and utilities all continue to climb. A 25% increase in electric rates, which the company says would raise average bills by about \$25 a month (or \$300 a year), would put a significant strain on our family's budget. For a large household like ours, every bit of added expense makes a difference.

Paychecks are not keeping up with inflation, and an increase of this size would force families like ours to make tough choices about where to cut back. Many families in our community are already struggling to stay ahead, and this kind of jump could make it even harder to make ends meet.

We understand that costs rise over time and that utilities need to maintain and update their systems, but a one-time 25% rate hike feels excessive. Other utilities in the state have been able to spread out smaller increases over time while still covering necessary improvements. We believe a more gradual and measured approach would be fairer to customers.

We respectfully ask that the Commission carefully review Black Hills Energy's proposed projects to ensure that only essential and time-sensitive upgrades move forward at this stage. If some projects can be delayed, phased in, or supported by other funding sources, it could help lessen the financial burden on ratepayers.

If a rate increase is ultimately approved, we strongly urge the Commission to consider options such as phasing it in over several years or providing assistance and energy-efficiency programs to help families, low-income households, and seniors manage higher bills.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the concerns of working families like ours. We appreciate the Commission's efforts to balance utility needs with affordability for South Dakotans. Please include this letter as part of the official record for Docket EL26-003.

Sincerely,
Nate and Emily Hammerstrom

[REDACTED]
Sturgis, SD 57785
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]