



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OMA Warns that PUCO Ruling in FirstEnergy Case Will Impose Up to
\$1 Billion in New Costs on Electricity Customers**

Rider amounts to an unwarranted subsidy for FirstEnergy, says the OMA, and will stifle competition, drive electricity costs up and harm manufacturing competitiveness.

(Columbus, OH): Eric Burkland, president of The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA), issued the following statement today commenting on the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) decision to allow FirstEnergy to collect up to \$1 billion in unwarranted, above-market customer charges through a "grid modernization" rider:

"Today's decision by the PUCO to give FirstEnergy a subsidy through a "grid modernization" rider is a setback for electricity consumers in Ohio. If implemented, the rider essentially will serve as another new tax, potentially costing families and businesses \$1 billion, while also setting a precedent for the PUCO to grant above-market customer charges to the state's other utilities to bolster utilities' financials.

These unwarranted new costs will put another strain on the budgets of families, particularly those least advantaged, and will harm the competitiveness of businesses, especially those that are energy intensive.

What do these electricity customers get for the new costs? Pretty much nothing. The customers are being asked to pay FirstEnergy with no direct consumer benefits. The rider is called a "grid modernization rider," but requires FirstEnergy to do nothing to actually modernize the grid.

Customers are paying to prop up the finances of a failing company. FirstEnergy should address its own financial troubles by using methods manufacturers and other businesses are required to use - cut costs, sell assets, sell equity - rather than rely on a customer bailout."

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The mission of The Ohio Manufacturers' Association is to protect and grow Ohio manufacturing.