



International Institute  
of Los Angeles



# CHANGES Program

Consumer Help and Awareness  
of Natural Gas and Electricity Services

## QUARTERLY REPORT

Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025

# CONTENTS

---

Introduction and  
Activity Overview

---

**3**

---

Outreach Activities

---

**4**

---

Consumer Education

---

**7**

---

Case Assistance

---

**10**

---

Trends Analysis

---

**16**

## INTRODUCTION

CHANGES (Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services) was established by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to address the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) consumers. The program provides outreach, education, and case resolution services to consumers in the language of their choice through a statewide coalition of 25 Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The coalition has the capacity to provide services in 78 languages. The program is administered by International Institute of Los Angeles with assistance from Milestone Consulting LLC.

This report provides an overview of services provided through the CHANGES Program in the first quarter of the program year, July 1 – September 30, 2025.

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The following services were completed during this reporting period:

### **Outreach**

- 23 Community Events
- 3 Media Placements
- 11 Social Media Posts

### **Consumer Education**

- 6,620 Consumer Education units were delivered
- Education was delivered in 20 languages

### **Case Assistance**

- 197 Dispute Cases
- 1,373 Needs Assistance

# OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

CHANGES CBOs conduct a variety of outreach activities to inform limited English proficient communities about available CHANGES services and how to access them. Outreach strategies include placing articles and interviews with in-language media, posting announcements on a variety of social media platforms, attendance at community resource events such as health fairs and ethnic community celebrations, and other activities designed to reach various ethnic communities served by the CBOs.

## Community Events

CBOs attend local community events to distribute outreach materials and inform their communities about available services. CBOs must reach a minimum of 500 event attendees to meet requirements for compensation. CHANGES CBOs conducted outreach at the following events this reporting period.

COMMUNITY EVENT OUTREACH Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025				
Event	City	IOU	Language	Attendees
Homenetmen 48 <sup>th</sup> Navasartian Games and Festival	Van Nuys	SCE & SCG	Armenian	6,000
Ohana Walk	Sacramento	PG&E	English	700
Recovery Happens	Redlands	SCE & SCG	Spanish	200
			Vietnamese	200
			Mandarin	200
South Bay Union School District Kick-Off Event	San Diego	SDG&E	Spanish	700
Great Kirk Elementary Carnival	Madera	PG&E	Spanish	620
Consulado de Mexico Community Event	Fresno	PG&E	Spanish	200
Afghan Mela	Fremont	PG&E	Dari	500
Backpack Distribution	Fremont	PG&E	Dari	100
National Night Out	Los Angeles	SCE & SCG	Cambodian	800
Independence Day Live Drone Show	San Gabriel	SCE & SCG	Cambodian	1,000
			Spanish	1,000
			English	500
Senior Wellness Fair	Rosemead	SCE & SCG	Cambodian	500
Back to School Backpack Event	San Bernardino	SCE & SCG	Mandarin	200
			Spanish	200
			Vietnamese	200
CAP Resource Fair	Fontana	SCE & SCG	Mandarin	200
			Spanish	200
			Vietnamese	250

CHANGES Program Quarterly Report  
Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025

<b>Chinatown Autumn Moon Festival</b>	San Francisco	PG&E	Chinese	35,000
<b>Full Moon Festival</b>	San Jose	PG&E	Korean	400
<b>Lotus Festival</b>	Los Angeles	SCE & SCG	English	400
			Korean	400
			Spanish	400
<b>Back to School Fair</b>	Los Angeles	SCE & SCG	Spanish	300
<b>Community Celebration</b>	Los Angeles	SCE & SCG	Spanish	130
<b>Back to School Resource Fair</b>	Madera	PG&E	Spanish	300
<b>Family Resource Fair</b>	Madera	PG&E	Spanish	250
<b>Community Health &amp; Backpack Giveaway</b>	Madera	PG&#	Spanish	550
<b>Vietnamese American Experiences Conference</b>	Garden Grove	SCE & SCG	Vietnamese	531
<b>3rd Annual Recovery Happens Picnic</b>	Santa Ana	SCE & SCG	Vietnamese	856
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>53,987</b>

### Community Presentations

CHANGES CBOs make presentations about program available services to other organizations in their communities at Task Force, Coalition, Event Planning, and other meetings. Meeting attendees are advised of process to refer clients to the CHANGES CBO for assistance. Presentations must be made to a minimum of five different organizations in attendance.

Community Presentations Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025	
No Community Presentations were completed this quarter	

### Media Outreach

Media outreach consists of disseminating program information through in-language television and radio broadcast media and print outlets. The following media outreach was conducted in this reporting period.

MEDIA OUTREACH Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025				
Date	Publication/Station/Program	Type	Language	Potential Reach
9-6-25	SF Korean	Print	Korean	30,000
9-26-25	VietFace TV SoCal 57.2	Television	Vietnamese	68,975
9-27-25	VietFace TV SoCal 57.2	Television	Vietnamese	68,975
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>167,950</b>

Y-T-D MEDIA OUTREACH	
Language	Potential Reach
Korean	30,000
Vietnamese	137,950
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>167,950</b>

## Social Media Outreach

Social media outreach consists of in-language posts by CHANGES CBOs on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others typically used by LEP and immigrant communities.

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025		
Platform	Total Posts This Quarter	Total Posts Y-T-D
Facebook	4	4
Instagram	4	4
We Chat	0	0
X	3	3
Other	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

# CONSUMER EDUCATION

Consumer Education is provided in both group settings and in one-to-one conversations. Sessions include content delivery and discussions about pre-determined telecom topics. Sessions are at least 45 minutes in length, including time spent on administrative and documentation tasks. Educational materials consist of CHANGES handouts specific to each topic.

CONSUMER EDUCATION BY LANGUAGE Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025			
Language	This Quarter*	Previous Quarters	Y-T-D
Arabic	116	0	116
Armenian	238	0	238
Cambodian	486	0	486
Cantonese	481	0	481
Dari	585	0	585
English	232	0	232
English – Native American	347	0	347
Haitian Creole	8	0	8
Hmong	112	0	112

CHANGES Program Quarterly Report  
Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025

Japanese	26	0	26
Korean	405	0	405
Mandarin	235	0	235
Mein	122	0	122
Pashto	34	0	34
Portuguese	159	0	159
Spanish	1,376	0	1,376
Swahili	2	0	2
Tagalog	20	0	20
Ukrainian	16	0	16
Vietnamese	1,292	0	1,292
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,292</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,292</b>

\*Note: The total number of consumers educated by language will be fewer than the number of educations by topic because more than one topic may be presented in some educational workshops.

CONSUMER EDUCATION BY TOPIC Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025			
Topic	This Quarter*	Previous Quarters	Y-T-D
Avoiding Disconnection	639	0	639
CARE and Other Assistance Programs	1,705	0	1,705
Choosing Your Electricity Rate Plan	355	0	355
Energy Conservation	659	0	659
Gas Aggregation	591	0	591
High Energy Use for CARE Customers	352	0	352
Level Pay Plan	206	0	206
Natural Gas and Electricity Safety	365	0	365
Understanding Your Bill	1,748	0	1,748
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,620</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,620</b>

\*Note: The total number of consumer education units delivered will be fewer exceed the number of educations by language because more than one topic may be presented in some educational workshops.

# CASE ASSISTANCE

Case assistance in CHANGES is provided to consumers to address the challenges and barriers LEP consumers face with understanding and navigating often complex utility and energy assistance processes. In the first quarter (July 1 – September 30, 2025), CHANGES CBOs resolved 1,570 cases.

### Dispute Resolution

Dispute resolution is provided to consumers who feel there are incorrect charges on their utility bills, who did not receive discounts for which they are eligible or have issues with the services they received.

Dispute Resolution -- Language Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025										
Language	PG&E	PG&E Y-T-D	SCE	SCE Y-T-D	SCG	SCG Y-T-D	SDGE	SDG&E Y-T-D	TOTAL	TOTAL Y-T-D
Arabic	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cambodian	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
Cantonese	29	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	29
Dari	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	5
English	15	15	27	27	18	18	1	1	61	61
Hmong	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Korean	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Mandarin	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pashto	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
Portuguese	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Russian	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Spanish	37	37	14	14	6	6	4	4	61	61
Tagalog	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Vietnamese	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>197</b>

The following issues were addressed in Dispute cases during the first quarter:

Dispute Resolution – Issues Addressed Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025										
Issue	PG&E	PG&E YTD	SCE	SCE YTD	SCG	SCG YTD	SDG&E	SDG&E YTD	TOTAL	TOTAL YTD
AMP Problem	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
AMP Follow-Up	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AMP Enrollment	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	5	5
Assisted with Making Payment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4
Bill Adjustment	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	7	7
CARE Customer High Energy Use Documentation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CARE/FERA	10	10	10	10	3	3	0	0	23	23



CHANGES Program Quarterly Report  
Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025

Changed Bill Language	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Changed Consumer information on Account	17	17	4	4	5	5	1	1	27	27
Closed Account	3	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	5	5
Collections	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Demand Response Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electricity Aggregation	37	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	37
Energy Assistance Fund	0	0	11	11	0	0	0	0	11	11
Energy Savings Assistance Program (ESA)	0	0	3	3	1	1	0	0	4	4
Gas Aggregation	59	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	59
Gas Assistance Fund	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	3
LIHEAP	25	25	14	14	8	8	4	4	51	51
Medical Baseline	0	0	6	6	5	5	0	0	11	11
Meter Service/Testing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Neighbor to Neighbor	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Other Payment Assistance	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Payment Extension	0	0	4	4	0	0	1	1	5	5
Payment Plan	1	1	5	5	3	3	0	0	9	9
PIPP	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Rate Plan Selection Assistance	0	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	8	8
REACH	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
Remove/Add Automatic Payment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Remove/Add Paperless Billing	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	2
Reported Scam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Set Up New Account	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	4	4
Set Up Online Account Access	1	1	2	2	4	4	0	0	7	7

CHANGES Program Quarterly Report  
Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025

Solar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third Party Notification	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Utility Company Refused to Speak with CBO***	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>299</b>

Note: The total number of issues addressed will exceed the total number of cases because some cases include multiple issues.

### Needs Assistance

Needs assistance cases may include helping clients with their services or bills, or assisting with payment arrangements, enrollment into consumer assistance programs, or referrals to financial assistance agencies. Needs Assistance is provided to consumers who request help with utility services or bills, but do not feel that their bill is incorrect or that the IOU has acted wrongly.

Needs Assistance - Language Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025										
Language	PG&E	PG&E YTD	SCE	SCE YTD	SCG	SCG YTD	SDG&E	SDG&E YTD	TOTAL	TOTAL YTD
Amharic	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Arabic	2	2	0	0	1	1	4	4	7	7
Armenian	0	0	0	0	75	75	0	0	75	75
Brazilian Portuguese	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cambodian	28	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	28
Cantonese	91	91	15	15	19	19	0	0	125	125
Dari	34	34	0	0	0	0	37	37	71	71
English	55	55	126	126	83	83	2	2	266	266
English – Native American	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Farsi	0	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	3	3
Hmong	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Karen	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Korean	36	36	17	17	8	8	0	0	61	61
Laotian	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mandarin	2	2	6	6	2	2	0	0	10	10
Mein	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pashto	6	6	0	0	0	0	13	13	19	19
Portuguese	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Russian	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Samoan	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Somali	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3
Spanish	244	244	117	117	121	121	19	19	501	501

CHANGES Program Quarterly Report  
Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025

Swahili	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
Tagalog	30	30	1	1	0	0	0	0	31	31
Ukrainian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Vietnamese	95	95	62	62	1	1	0	0	158	158
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>1,373</b>	<b>1,373</b>

The following services were provided in Needs Assistance cases in the first quarter of the program year:

Needs Assistance – Services Provided Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025										
Issue	PG&E	PG&E YTD	SCE	SCE YTD	SCG	SCG YTD	SDG&E	SDG&E YTD	TOTAL	TOTAL YTD
AMP Problem	1	1	2	2	1	1	0	0	4	4
AMP Follow-Up	1	1	6	6	48	48	2	2	57	57
AMP Enrollment	27	27	33	33	21	21	19	19	100	100
Assisted with Making Payment	5	5	4	4	3	3	0	0	12	12
Bill Adjustment	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
CARE Customer High Energy Use Documentation	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2
CARE/FERA	117	117	51	51	37	37	22	22	227	227
Changed Bill Language	12	12	2	2	0	0	0	0	14	14
Changed Consumer information on Account	14	14	5	5	7	7	2	2	28	28
Closed Account	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	5	5
Collections	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Consumer Education Only	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
Electricity Aggregation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Energy Assistance Fund	0	0	85	85	0	0	0	0	85	85
Energy Audit	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Energy Efficiency Tool	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ESA Program	24	24	9	9	4	4	0	0	37	37
Gas Aggregation	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Gas Assistance Fund	0	0	0	0	119	119	0	0	119	119
Level Pay Plan	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
LIHEAP	358	358	131	131	14	14	10	10	513	513
Medical Baseline	53	53	14	14	5	5	1	1	73	73
Meter Service/Testing	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Neighbor to Neighbor	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Other Payment Assistance	7	7	2	2	13	13	0	0	22	22
Payment Extension	1	1	53	53	58	58	14	14	126	126
Payment Plan	42	42	13	13	6	6	0	0	61	61
PIPP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rate Plan Selection Assistance	25	25	15	15	0	0	0	0	40	40
REACH	80	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	80
Reconnect Service	3	3	4	4	1	1	1	1	9	9
Remove/Add Automatic Payment	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	4
Remove/Add Paperless Billing	1	1	1	1	3	3	0	0	5	5
Reported Safety Problem	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1

Reported Scam	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Scheduled Customer Service Visit	0	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	3	3
Set Up Energy Alerts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Set Up New Account	19	19	0	0	0	0	10	10	29	29
Set Up Online Account Access	6	6	1	1	2	2	0	0	9	9
Solar	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Third Party Notification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wildfire Related Assistance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>1,678</b>	<b>1,678</b>

NOTE: The number of services provided will exceed the number of cases because many cases require more than one service.

# TRENDS ANALYSIS

Decision 15-12-047 establishing the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services (CHANGES) program as a permanent program called for a more formalized reporting of trends observed through the data collected by CHANGES community based organizations (CBOs) when they assist limited-English proficient consumers with issues related to their utility services.

## Summary of Main Findings

Current data, comparisons to previous reporting periods, and information provided by CHANGES CBOs lead to the following conclusions:

- Issues addressed this quarter remain consistent with previous reporting periods, with gas and electricity aggregation companies (CTAs and CCAs) as the top dispute case issues, and enrollment in payment assistance programs as the consistently most sought access type of needs assistance services.
- Outreach at 23 Community Events such as local or resource or health fairs were attended by CHANGES CBOs, potentially reaching nearly 54,000 attendees in the first quarter of the program year.
- CHANGES CBOs delivered 6,253 units of consumer education this quarter. Education was provided in 20 languages.
- Needs Assistance services provided during this quarter, as with all previous reporting periods, continue to reflect the need for bill reduction and emergency payment assistance programs.
- Payment assistance and bill reduction programs continue to be the predominant service provided in Needs Assistance cases. This does not reflect a trend. Low-income consumers have always and will continue to face challenges with the high costs of utility services in every region of the state.

These difficult circumstances are magnified as funding for assistance programs is stretched even more thinly, and program eligibility requirements have become more difficult to meet.

- Numerous rate increases have pushed consumers to their financial limits as they continue to receive higher bills.
- Dispute cases continue to reflect the difficulties faced by consumers from the increasingly high costs of utility services. Resolving Dispute issues has required seeking assistance to reduce balances prior to beginning to negotiate payment plans with utility companies.

Trends Overview

The most prevalent Dispute issues addressed this quarter include assisting LEP consumers with ongoing issues related to gas and electricity aggregation; and managing their accounts, billings and services. Nearly half of all Dispute Resolution cases were for the top three services provided this quarter.

Needs Assistance cases reflect a prevalence of seeking and securing payment assistance and bill reduction programs.

Most Prevalent Issues Addressed Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025		
Dispute Cases		
Issue/Service	Number of Cases	% of Total Cases this Quarter
Gas Aggregation	59	20%
LiHEAP	51	17%
Electricity Aggregation	37	12%
Needs Assistance Cases		
LiHEAP	513	31%
CARE/FERA	227	14%
Payment Extension	126	8%
Gas Assistance Fund	119	7%

## Trends Analysis

### Payment Assistance Programs

Payment assistance and bill reduction resources continue to be the most prevalent services provided and are anticipated to be requested more than any other service in the future. This is not a trend. Utility costs will continue to be beyond the means of most LEP, and all low income consumers.

Bill Reduction and Payment Assistance Programs Q1 July 1 – September 30, 2025			
Assistance Program	Number of Cases*	Percentage of Assistance Program Cases*	Percentage of Total Case Services*
Arrearage Management Program (AMP) Enrollment	105	8%	5%
CARE/FERA	250	20%	13%
Energy Assistance Fund	96	8%	5%
Energy Savings Assistance Program (ESA)	41	3%	2%
Gas Assistance Fund	122	10%	6%
LIHEAP	564	44%	29%
Medical Baseline	11	<1%	<1%
Neighbor to Neighbor	1	<1%	<1%
Other Payment Assistance	2	<1%	<1%
REACH	84	7%	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,276</b>		

\*Dispute and Needs Assistance cases combined

The consistent approval of rate increases, now numbering several per year for most consumers, make assistance programs less effective, as their benefits do not expand at pace with rate hikes. And existing and heavily relied upon programs such as LIHEAP are now more difficult to access as demand rises.

### **LIHEAP**

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The current annual budget is approximately \$4.5 million nationally. Funding for California in 2025 is nearly \$216 million, down 10% from the 2024 allocation.

LIHEAP assistance is overwhelmingly the most effective and relied upon resource CHANGES CBOs access when assisting consumers in both emergency situations and managing ongoing bills. However, the program has become increasingly difficult to access, apply for, and achieve successful approval.

In 2024, LIHEAP processing agencies in California reached budget thresholds that required them to implement a prioritization process to determine eligibility. The eligibility approval process now includes a points system applied to applications. This system was implemented in 2024 when rate increases sent requests for emergency assistance soaring. This prioritization system has led to many households that are eligible for LIHEAP not being approved to receive assistance because they are no longer considered a priority. Many CHANGES consumers, especially those with no minor children in the home, often do not meet the required points threshold and are denied assistance.

Processing and approval times have increased dramatically. In some counties, CBOs continue to experience approval delays of four months or more. In some counties, the wait time is long enough to make submitted applications and documentation invalid, and CBOs must begin again and resubmit documentation to replace submitted information that has

expired. During this period, consumers waiting months for approval continue to watch their balances increase and often face disconnection.

### **Arrearage Management Plan (AMP)**

The AMP program has been beneficial to consumers who have been able to maintain monthly AMP payments in addition to all new charges on their bill each month. While CHANGES CBOs continue to enroll consumers into the Arrearage Management Plan (AMP), this program can be extremely difficult for most CHANGES consumers to achieve the bill forgiveness they seek. Many CHANGES consumers expressed feelings of being misled by promises of debt forgiveness which did not occur because current high bills combined with required repayment of outstanding balances were impossible to maintain.

CBOs have found that enrollment into the AMP program became more challenging this quarter, after new enrollment guidelines require that applicants must have had a zero balance at some time during the past 24 months preceding application.

### **IOU Operated Assistance Programs**

Payment assistance programs operated and offered directly by IOUs are also being depleted or are more difficult to access. However, the reduction in availability of public utility assistance resources has led to more CBOs relying on

SDG&E's Neighbor to Neighbor program has tightened eligibility requirements and has led to significant reduction in bill assistance in the SD&G territory. Once the primary form of CHANGES assistance after LIHEAP in the SDG&E territory, CHANGES cases processing Neighbor to Neighbor applications was zero cases in the past 4 months.

Requests for PG&E's REACH program have increased.

COVID emergency utility assistance programs are no longer available.

Households that are concurrently enrolled in CARE and Medical Baseline and also receive LIHEAP and IOU payment assistance and can access ESA services still have bill balances that are higher than they can afford. The high cost of energy services far exceeds the ability of low income immigrant households to maintain safe, healthy environments. They are often forced to choose between having utilities in their homes and paying rent, or purchasing food and medicine, even after availing themselves of all available resources.

When traditional resources are limited or inadequate, CHANGES CBOs often seek additional payment assistance from local churches and community organizations. However, these resources have very limited and have sporadic availability. Typically, after applying all available resources to a consumer's balance, CHANGES CBOs must still negotiate a payment plan for the consumer. And because payment plans require a monthly payment in addition to any new charges for the month, even those become unaffordable, eventually pushing the household to disconnection.

### **Gas and Electricity Aggregation**

The largest number of dispute cases during this reporting period addressed issues related to gas and electricity aggregation, comprising 32% of all services provided in Dispute cases completed this reporting period.

Consumers often do not realize that their accounts have been transferred to Core Transport Agents (CTAs) or Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) until it has been pointed out to them by CHANGES CBOs. Many are uncomfortable with being enrolled with a company they did not request.

- Most consumers do not recall being contacted by a CTA prior to being enrolled with them.
- Others remember speaking with a CTA or its contracted marketing associate but told the company they did not want to change companies and were switched anyway.
- Still others switched willingly because they were assured that their bills would be lower but received higher bills.
- It is unclear how rate increases and/or energy usage impacted bill amounts from CTAs as compared to IOUs, however many consumers who are receiving higher bills are choosing to transfer back to IOUs.

### **Conclusion**

Energy costs are unaffordable regardless of the payment assistance and bill reduction resources any consumer can access. Continuous rate increases will impact Californians' ability to maintain safe and healthy living situations and lead to more limited financial resources for food, housing, medical care and transportation.

Gas and Electricity Aggregation cases continue to be a significant issue among consumers in the PG&E territory, as aggressive practices of 3<sup>rd</sup> party marketing companies result in confusion and dissatisfaction among consumers that is still being felt today.

The CHANGES Program budget has not been increased since the inception of the program a decade ago and is insufficient to maintain a consistent level of services in all program components.

CHANGES CBOs and the consumers they serve continue to encounter increasing difficulties with accessing emergency payment assistance and bill reduction programs. Assistance program budgets do not keep pace with raising rates and program administrators are faced with both reducing assistance payment amounts and applying more stringent eligibility requirements.