



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

October 21, 2015

Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02888

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

We write to support an emergency regulation from the Public Utilities Commission to restore gas and electric services to LIHEAP-eligible gas and electric utility customers. We respectfully ask the commission to modify the termination/restoration rules for the remainder of the 2015 calendar year to allow for a reasonable down payment for restoration (or to avoid termination) of utility service. This would afford the most-vulnerable consumers an achievable accommodation in order to ensure continued or renewed utility service heading into the winter months.

Last year, the Public Utilities Commission took action to help low income households survive the approaching winter months by issuing emergency regulations that modified the restoration of gas and electric services to LIHEAP-eligible utility customers. We ask that the Commission again take action to protect our most vulnerable citizens, particularly given last year's cold winter and high utility costs, causing many Rhode Islanders to accumulate arrearages.

We want to thank you for your commitment to balancing the needs of all rate-payers. We encourage you to listen to the input of the consumer advocacy community on behalf of all Rhode Islanders who are struggling during these difficult financial times. Reasonable payment plan terms provide struggling households with an opportunity to responsibly repay back bills over time, saving other ratepayers the cost of account balances that would otherwise be written off by the utility company as uncollectible.

The lack of affordable energy disproportionately harms low income, the disabled, working poor and the elderly who are on a fixed income. Too many Rhode Islanders presently suffer from energy insecurity, choosing between paying their bills and paying for food, medicine and other basic needs. Action is needed once again to help low-income households.

Thank you in advance for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Mattiello
Speaker of the House

M. Teresa Paiva Weed
President of the Senate

c: Thomas F. Ahern, Administrator, RI Public Utilities Commission
Henry Shelton, Director, George Wiley Center