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National Lawyers Guild  
Rhode Island Chapter  
P.O. Box 40162  
Providence, RI 02940



Chairperson Margaret Curran  
Commissioner Paul J. Roberti  
Commissioner Herbert F. DeSimone, Jr.  
Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission  
89 Jefferson Boulevard  
Warwick, RI 02888

December 19, 2013

Dear Members of the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission,

Please postpone your vote on the proposed changes to the Termination Rules, and hold accessible hearings across our state on this important issue, so that those who will be most affected by the proposed changes, the poor and the elderly, can voice their concerns.

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild joins with our fellow Rhode Islanders across the state in asking the Commission to postpone the rule changes until accessible hearings can be held.

Heat and electricity shut-offs threaten the health and safety of our most vulnerable neighbors. Unfortunately, every year at least 20,000 households in our state experience shut-offs. This is shockingly high number that we all should be working to decrease, yet the proposed rule changes would weaken important protections and increase the number of shut-offs, thus jeopardizing the health and safety of more low income people in our state.

The proposed changes include removing protections for unemployed people, narrowing protection for the disabled and seniors, shortening the winter moratorium on shut-offs, and cutting protection during heat waves. Like many Rhode Islanders we are opposed to the shortening of the winter moratorium. Ending the shut-off moratorium on March 31st is dangerous, since we often experience freezing weather into April.

In addition, the proposed changes should be translated into Spanish and other commonly spoken languages here in Rhode Island, including Southeast Asian languages such as Khmer, so that those who would be most affected by the changes can be given notice. Many households where English is not the first language are already disproportionately at greater risk of heat and electricity shut-offs, so getting the word out to these households is important.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Benjamin Evans, Esq. on behalf of the National Lawyers Guild, Rhode Island Chapter