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Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission:

Submitted via email to:

PUC.PublicComments@puc.ri.gov, Luly.Massaro@puc.ri.gov, Ronald.Gerwatowski@puc.ri.gov, Abigail.Anthony@puc.ri.gov, John.Revens@puc.ri.gov, Todd.Bianco@puc.ri.gov, and in person by hand.

RE: Rhode Island Energy Rate Change

In less than a year since acquiring control of our public utility services from National Grid, RI Energy has proposed historic rate hikes for electric and natural gas services. In order for these rate hikes to go into effect, they both have to be approved by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). We are against RI Energy's request to enact the largest rate increase in decades for electric and natural gas services. During a time where working people, families, and seniors are struggling with inflation and stagnant incomes, we cannot allow for our utility rates to drastically increase. RI Energy should not be allowed to come to our state and expect us to just accept their greedy, corporate-driven proposals. George Wiley Center members and our allies are calling on the RI PUC and RI Energy to commit to the demands of our communities.

- The PUC must decrease the profit margin of utility companies, from 10% back to 6%
- RI Energy should voluntarily set their profit margin at lower levels, instead of what the PUC allows
- · RI Energy must commit with working to pass a Percentage Income Payment Plan
- In the immediate, RI Energy must share the burden of increasing electricity and natural gas market costs by absorbing some of the increased costs and withdraw their current rate hike proposals.

RI Energy had the assets to purchase RI National Grid, so they have the money to help avoid or absorb this huge rate hike. This rate hike is not an act of good faith for a company who promised the RI PUC and other stakeholders that they would improve services and lower costs for ratepayers.

The below comments are from Rhode Island residents who are not able to attend the hearing about the proposed rate increases. These residents share the reasons why they are oppose to the proposed rate increases. Others listed below want to go on record requesting the RI PUC reject the proposed rate increases.

Wants to remain anonymous: I work with many low-income clients and their families at a community health institute, and these rate hikes would have devastating effects on RI families that have already been struggling to make utility payments--not to mention rent, childcare, and other financial strains. These proposed rate increases are outrageous and would have harmful effects on us all.

Archana Ramanujam, Providence: The cost of living have already skyrocketed and if electricity and natural gas prices are to rise, we would certainly have to work harder to save for a home or for other purposes (pension, having children, a wedding etc.)

Carin Papendorp, Providence: As a renter I have no ability to choose energy efficient appliances. These utility rate increases would be extremely harmful for so many Rhode Islanders.

Paul Jewer, Providence: I was shut off for a month and it was misery. I am disabled and I don't have much money.

Gilda Vicario, Providence: I'm on a fixed income and this hike would be very difficult.

Everett Pope, Providence: I lived 2 years without gas

Joan Facha, Pawtucket: I struggle to keep up with the bills. The cost of everything is so high and I am on a fixed income. I have heart problems so my electricity can't be shut off please help me.

Janet Searles, Warwick: It is unconscionable for companies who provide heat and electricity to homeowners and/or renters who are struggling to put food on the table and/or work several jobs to barely survive, to shut off their electricity. Times are difficult for people- there has to be a way for the richest nation in the world to care for those citizens who are struggling. Heat, electricity and food are just plain necessities, not luxuries!

Jill Poisson, Providence: As a child we lived for months sometimes without electricity and/or heat, as an adult I have lived without utilities for a month or two. As a child who grew up in poverty I know what it is like to see my mother decide between food and bills. I know what it is like to live without electricity for months. I know what it is like to go into the fall and winter without heat. I know you have to crack the windows if you use kerosine heaters or you might die. I know how to boil water on a stove to take a hot bath. I knew this as a child. No kid or adult should have to face these challenges. Greed and lack of basic care for our fellow humans leads to unnecessary suffering. The US is supposedly the richest nation on earth yet people suffer because of greedy electricity and gas companies. If a company can afford to buy our utility companies they can afford the cost of running it. If they can't then give it to the people.

Jordan Weinberg, Providence: I have seen the negative effects of other increases in costs and a rate hike would force people to make difficult and harmful decisions that would hurt people. There is no good reason to change these rates.

Wants to remain anonymous: I am a person who has had the privilege and social capital thus far been able to afford the cost of utilities for myself and my son, but in the last few years that has become more and more precarious -- the current cost increases will make it impossible for me to continue in my current rental apartment or to live without roommates. As a 48-year-old professional and single mother I say this as someone who has had access to education, community support, and a job that while not lucrative, provides more than so many in America live on. It is ludicrous that access to utility service is not accessible across the board in our communities as a basic right -- though I suppose with lack of access to healthcare and adequate paid family leave I should not be surprised that in yet another area we as a culture do not care for the basic well-being of our communities.

Katelyn Booth, Providence: As a teacher in Providence I am constantly hearing stories from my students about bills not being able to be paid, about them going without internet and struggling to get their work done with all the virtual work we've done in the last few years, with students whose parents cannot afford their electric bills with so many people living in their homes because of the housing crisis additional family have moved in and used resources. There are students of mine here who struggle to have heat in the winter or sufficient cooling in the summer even with just fans because of the increases to their utility bills. Their families are afraid to allow them to use heaters or AC units out of fear of the rise in utility bill that they won't be able to cover. And that is in the last few years, imagine when they increase the cost! Many of our youth struggle because their families are not able to pay these bills regularly. Many of my students come from homes with single mothers, they work very hard to provide for their children but a price increase will crush them. There are more low-income housing residence than you would ever believe and without putting a cap on these prices, or offering any sort of solution for people who are in over their heads with their bills we are setting them up to fail which comes down on their children who through no fault of their own are in situations where them using utilities and racking up costs to get through the day with their regular routine becomes a stressor on the rest of the family.

Comforts like being able to keep the lights on are a human right, and the fact that utility companies have lied to the general public about not increasing prices is a travesty. We are setting people up to fail. While I have never personally had my bills shut off because I am privileged to work a full-time job that pays me well, and have a partner with the same situation it is not lost on me how many people are being put in a disadvantage by utility companies lying and actively putting people in positions where they're going to be left in the cold and in the dark. Utility companies need to provide solutions like income-based payment plans so that we aren't setting people up to fail when a lot of the time these situations of bills being unpaid and things being shut off ends up affecting the most vulnerable in the worst way.

Sophie Hagen, Providence: Drastic hikes to utility rates can make your life suddenly unaffordable. Rhode Islanders have the right to access utility systems without fear of being unable to afford them.

Tony Levada, Providence: I lived a couple of weeks without utilities and it made it almost impossible to live sustainably. As a minority fresh out of college with debt I already struggle to pay bills. I couldn't imagine my bills being another 50% of the amount.

Wants to remain anonymous: I lived for 1-2 months without utilities, we had to use candles and boil water to take showers. Growing up I struggled to afford to pay for utilities and rent and faced eviction and lack of utilities on several occasions at different points in my life. I struggled with food insecurity, housing insecurity, and had to boil water to shower and did homework in the dark.

Brianna Polanco, **Providence**: The nights are getting colder already. Warmth and food is a basic human right and should be accessible to everyone.

Frank Previti, Providence: While I am fortunate enough to earn enough money to pay my own utilities, I strongly support prioritizing individual needs for our less fortunate over corporate profits. My community volunteerism and charitable donations are not enough to stop the problem without corporate involvement.

Zoe Chaves, Pawtucket: I used to be a junior social worker at Hasbro Children's Hospital. I worked with many low-income families without access to utilities due to shutoff. I saw first-hand how it impacted their health and wellness and drove them further into poverty - someone without internet can't apply for a job, kids can't see to study, more money spent on dining out, etc. Protecting folks from rate hikes is a moral and economic good.

Derrick Bergeron, North Kingstown: We're a single income household with two kids, and while we thankfully don't struggle the way so many others do, we still live paycheck to paycheck. This rate increase is going to push other bills aside from us and make the struggle to get out from under all the debt we already have that much harder.

Kristen Haines, Providence: It has been incredibly difficult to afford increasing electric and gas costs as is. I only stayed housed this past year because of the rent relief program which paid utilities and three months' rent.

Emily Ellis, Providence: As a senior, I turn on air condition in extreme cases and I heat is turned on into the winter months, and shut off as early as it is bearable.

Matt LaBranche, Providence: I pay 3 times more than friends living in other states. Now they want to raise it even more. How rude and crude and inhuman these actions are. Lowering my quality of life for their profit

Pennie Patalano, West Warwick: The time has come to look after the people of this state... cost of goods, taxes, gasoline, utilities, and so on: have all gone up by at least 30%... enough is enough and most cannot handle another increase to our monthly expenses... we are all at a point where we will have to pick and choose our expenses... not a good scenario

Jane Congleton, Providence: This rate hike would be an attack on poor people of Rhode Island. This decision is punishing folks who are struggling to make ends meet and incredibly lacking in the consideration that being poor is not the fault of the person.

Nguissaly Faye, Providence: It's my struggle for many years. I haven't been able to clear my bills.

Kerry Baptista, Woonsocket: Lived for 3 years without utilities. Single dad on SSI and I only get \$750 a month and rent are almost double that.

Anne Marie McKenna, Providence: I work fulltime and also on Social Security to pay my bills, and don't qualify for any help because of my income which isn't enough to pay bills.

Brittany Palumbo, Barrington: As we head into winter, it is absolutely an income contingent plan for all of our residents to afford their utility bills. At this point, utilities are absolutely a basic need. Raising rates by as much as 50% is just as unconscionable as shut-offs, especially during extreme temperatures requiring heating or cooling. Additionally, so many of our residents have vital, lifesaving medications that require refrigeration. These medications are already so expensive, we should not be allowing a 50% hike in rates to keep their utilities! There is no good reason we cannot pass PIPP and take every effort to meet the needs of all our residents.

Toni Rose, Providence: I think electricity and gas is a basic need for all! But it shouldn't just be about low-income people getting help, we are struggling! I work every day but still struggle with my utilities bills because of paying rent, food and other necessities...and I truly feel that this is a

greedy move by a company that hasn't been here that long and according to some colleagues of mine, will shut you off quicker than National Grid ever did! Please consider us the consumers in this matter! People are doing the best we can!!

Shana Klinger, Pawtucket: I am 73 years old on Social Security at a very modest level and with minimal savings, having worked my entire life in the non-profit sector. My utility bills (gas for heat and electric) are becoming a larger and larger proportion of my monthly bills. Together with rent, they are now almost equal to my entire monthly Social Security check. How are people like me supposed to buy food and medicine when it is so expensive to just pay utilities and rent? Decision-makers have to stop putting the needs of corporations and the utility owners first, over the welfare of citizens like me who have worked hard and paid into Social Security our whole lives.

Jason Timothy, Providence: The raising of utilities will only add to the troubles of increasing rents, which will eventually put more people on the street.

Francisco Ferreira: Don't raise the prices, if anything lower it. My wife is disabled and she cannot walk. I am also disabled but I can walk. She is on SSI and I am on SSDI. Paying the utility bill is very tough. My electric and gas bills are way too high. I don't think it is fair.

Nitza Torres: It (the rate hike) is an injustice. I live in the dark because I can't afford to pay. I had 3 strokes and I am disabled with no income.

Daniel Lorry: I am currently hundreds of dollars behind on utilities. My wife recently passed away and I am homebound and disabled, now with only one income. Any increase to the utilities would make it IMPOSSIBLE to pay utilities and I am opposed to the rate hike.

Douglas Pratt: Increase in utility rate, I know they try to increase the rate every year. Corporate greed plays a role here. It increases the amount I owe, and I am on disability with permanent deferment. Earlier this year I was on the AMP program, and the bills because \$1,000 is not nearly enough to cover everything, but I got onto the permanent deferment program right on time.

Rue S.: High utility costs takes food off our tables. I oppose the rate hike.

Pastor Fortune: Some of the utility bills were high. They wouldn't let you try to get caught up, I felt it was rude. I oppose the rate hike. I faced 2 utility shutoffs before I moved into this new building.

Leo J. Lavault: The company is giving me a hard time. They tried to cut off my electricity.

Mary Bouley, Pawtucket: I went 2 days without power. We all have health issues in our house, so it was extremely difficult.

Cherie Cruz, Pawtucket: I was cut off for a couple months (and periodically afterwards), we took cold showers, no light to see after 7:00pm so we had to make sure any homework or things that needed to be done if we needed light was done prior. We could not cook food and fortunately we lived in an apartment building and our neighbor let us use their electricity and run a plug to their house to use a hotplate to cook sometimes. We could not purchase food that needed to be refrigerated because we had no electricity to keep food cold. It was very difficult to live and will never forget how hard it was just to survive every day without utilities.

Angelisa Ruiz, Woonsocket: I was cut off for 2 days and lost food. It was as challenging trying to get services back on and finding where to stay with my kids while waiting for service to be out on.

Erica Nason, Pawtucket: I went 3 weeks with no electricity with my 4 children. I am a single mom struggling off just my one income from work. It was the scariest most depressing time in my life

Bella Robinson, Coyote RI, West Warwick: I went several days at a time, family unable to cook, shower, do laundry. Many poor people must choose between rent, utilities, and food.

Kate Lock, **Providence**: I was cut off for four days during high summer temperatures on a 3rd floor apartment.

Jean Geminiani, West Warwick: I've had to borrow money from friends and 401k this year alone to afford heat because I took freezing cold showers in the winter.

Alyson Lucas, Pawtucket: I have experienced this (utility termination) in the past, while raising my son as a single parent. I have had my utilities shut off due to not being able to pay the bills. I don't remember how long it lasted; I just remember having to borrow money from a family member to have everything turned back on. I was fortunate enough to be able to that and I know not everyone is. It was stressful, left me sleepless and without a lot of food as I had to throw a lot of it out because it went bad without refrigeration, it was awful.

Angela Humphrey, Providence: My cut off and it lasted less than two weeks. I was unable to stay in my house without heat or hot water.

Jennifer Stevens, Providence: I've gone a few days without heat and had to sleep elsewhere.

Danielle Tellier, Providence: I work 2 jobs and I am lucky to own a home for the last 10 years (no absurd rent hikes) and still I struggle to pay gas, electric, water and sewage bills on top of basic food and transportation costs.

Lynn Covington, Providence: I'm 71 and still working my physical labor (garden) business due to property tax, truck insurance and homeowners' insurance and now utility bills. I basically live on my social security income and Medicare. I am awaiting a decision about the federal program that discounts internet service (Verizon) for low-income individuals.

Kristen Haines, Providence: It has been incredibly difficult to afford increasing electric and gas costs as is. I only stayed housed this past year because of the rent relief program which paid utilities and three months' rent.

Jeremy Hart, Pawtucket: I couldn't afford gas in the winter, so I used my electric stove to warm my apartment.

Derrick Bergeron, North Kingstown: We're a single income household with two kids, and live paycheck to paycheck. This rate increase is going to push other bills aside from us and make the struggle to get out from under all the debt we already have that much harder.

Jason Timothy, Providence: The raising of utilities will only add to the troubles of increasing

rents, which will eventually put more people on the street.

Nathan Yeaw, Woonsocket: My electric bill for July went from a high \$140 to \$238, nearly a \$100 increase. It should not take the equivalent of a car payment to pay for my utility bills to keep a 2-bedroom apartment comfortable in the summer.

Brianna Polanco, **Providence**: I've been cut off before. The nights are getting colder already. Warmth and food are a basic human right and should be accessible to everyone.

John Doe, Providence: I've been cut off for 1-2 months. We had to use candles and boil water to take showers.

Debra Harris, Providence: I was cut off for months. Couldn't bathe, wash dishes, and the days and nights were freezing.

Tony Levada, Providence: I was cut off for a couple of weeks and it made it impossible to live sustainably.

Rayna Robinson, Providence: I've almost had my services terminated and it may happen sometime soon. That's scary because I have a son who has disabilities and who has bad Insomnia and is non-verbal. My struggle to pay utilities is so very hard. My son has really, really, bad insomnia, and Autism and he is non-verbal and unaware of dangers. Living on one monthly income is hard to manage all the bill's and my son's medicine because the United Healthcare through rite care doesn't pay or help pay for certain medicine. I cannot help from United Healthcare so I have to do it on my own.

Without utilities how will we see to do homework? How will we keep our food cold throughout the month? How will we see to take showers or use the bathroom? How will we see to go down stairs in the hallway from the 3rd floor? Or use the stove to cook our meals. How will we keep warm in this freezing months to come? There are a lot of people especially who have children and children with disabilities along with the elderly. We matter and we struggle. Please help people like us who suffer finically who are not finically stable to pay a lower cost or make program. Please A Lower the cost. Please help if you have a heart especially for people who have disabilities like my 10-year-old son. We could be in even more danger because his mom cannot hardly afford it now especially because they raised it up even more. Thank you for reading my true-life story!

Cara Belle, Providence: I was almost homeless because of the rent increases. I also had no utilities.

Gina Lerman, Pawtucket: Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have dealt with a sharp loss of income and am still struggling to find decent work. With rent hikes and an increased cost of living, I cannot afford for my utilities bill to increase It is unconscionable that one greedy corporation has monopoly control over the lives of Rhode Islanders. Whether your house has heat in the winter is LIFE or DEATH! Percentage Income Payment Plan PIPP is a great idea to protect those of us who are struggling to keep up with the cost of living. This will save lives and improve lives right now! Utilities are necessary for our modern lives. They are a public good. What I would like to see in the future is for the utilities to be publicly owned and managed. Corporations should not profit from them.

Jane Angell, Wakefield: I was cut off for several days. It was horrible because I still had school aged children at the time. It was embarrassing and life-changing for them. I and they will never

forget it.

Rhonda Beaumier, Cranston: I had no electricity for 6months. I had no hot water to bathe myself and my young child unless I heated water outside with a propane tank.

Carl Jefferson, Cranston: Lost services for weeks. I was unable to cook and had no hot water with kids.

Annmarie Mendes, Providence: I was cut off for a month. I am a single parent of two and out of work on TDI. I had to wait 6 weeks just to get a check, but the electric company didn't care neither did the gas company shut my s*** right off.

Frederic Pockar, North Providence: I paid the utility \$4,000 for my deceased Mom's bill and was still terminated the next day, leaving me without my CPAP machine for weeks until we bought a generator. Extremely unreasonable operations.

Dee Wojcicki, East Providence: I had to rely on friends and family during Covid to help me pay my bills to avoid termination.

Deanna Coleman, Providence: We haven't been terminated yet because we've have managed to keep afloat with payment plans. Rate hikes are a slap in the face for working-class people when the main leaders of the utilities are making millions.

Gregory Mundy, Providence: I was terminated many years ago for 2 weeks. I had recently graduated from college and I was barely making enough to pay rent, food, and utilities.

Margaret Finn, Pawtucket, First Unitarian Church of Providence: I am fortunate that I can pay my bills, but this excessive increase is egregious and will affect the poor and working-class people of RI. Profits are understandable, but excessive profits are not.

Cathy Clasper-Torch, Providence, Central Congregational Church

Eva Agudelo, Providence, RI Community Food Bank

Carl Jefferson, Cranston, Life Change Church

Mary Pendergast, Pawtucket, Sisters of Mercy

Jane Houle, Pawtucket, Beneficent Congregational Church

Kevin Melfi, Cranston, Shalom USA

Frances Webber, Providence, SURJ

Kaeli Sutton, Bristol, Open Circle

Janet Searles, Warwick, Westminster Unitarian Church

Pamela Poniatowski, Riverside, RI Poor People's Campaign

Roxanne Stern, East Providence, Green Team Environmental Task Force

Michsel Ziegler, Providence, Brown University Graduate Labor Organization, AFT-AFL-CIO

Jacqueline Arpin, Slatersville, Community Care Alliance

Monica Huertas, Providence, The People's Port Authority

Sarah Berns, Providence Imshan Dhrolia, Providence Jess Huetteman, Providence Raymond Tetrault, Providence Paula Donovan, Providence Louri Graham, Providence Mary Dwyer, East Providence

Yuselly Mendoza, Providence Chelsea DeSantis, Providence Calvin Drayton, Central Falls Martin Newman, Providence Darlene Barber, Pawtucket Helene K., Providence Lila Guilbault Lopez, Lincoln Nick Katkevich, South Kingstown Rhonda Beaumier, Cranston Tyler Mills, Providence Jennifer Pearce, Portsmouth Peter Nightingale, Kingston Kate Schapira, Providence

David A. Ames, Providence Shelby Mack, Pawtucket John Cavaliere, West Warwick Susan Chakmakian, Cranston Marco Carrasco, Cranston Michelle Eaton, Warren Darcie Dennigan, Providence Jeannine Casselman, Warren Devra Levy, Providence Sean Buckley, Middletown Shivani Nishar, Providence Tyson Bottenus, Providence John Fazzino, Providence Andrea Rojas, Providence Samy Amkieh, Providence Diane Pina. Foster Lee Rodman, Providence, R. Catania, Scituate Maria Catania, Johnston Kirk Robinson, Providence Thomas Reid. Providence Stephanie Nadeau, Warwick Melanie DeSantis. Pawtucket David Salzillo, Providence Michael Salzillo, Providence Ti Dinh, Providence Nicole Martins, East Providence Erin Papa, Providence Matt Gunnip, Providence Rose Lefevre, Providence Cheri Rossi. Providence JC. Woonsocket Richard Barnard, Pawtucket Nicole Bergeron, North Kingston Maija Whelan, Providence Lauren Niedel, Chepachet Char Merrick, Providence Nzinga Misgana, Pawtucket Andrea Desilets, Warwick Sarah Thompson, Woonsocket John Boles, Providence Angela Howard-McParland, Cranston Marissa Saint, Providence Meghan DeCarvalho, Bristol Michelle Doiron, Providence Kristina Brown, Cranston Angela Zampell, East Providence Carol DeFeciani, Providence Lisa Maloney, Providence Taylor Ellis, South Kingstown Sylvianne Shurman. Providence Rose Rowson, Providence Elaine Budish, Providence Deanna Coleman. Providence Siraj Sindhu, Pawtucket Victoria Cheff, Providence

Kerri Howard, Cranston Jack Sullivan, Providence Andrew Fidas, Providence Daniela Del Portillo, Providence Manish Maharjan, Providence Laurel Leake, Providence Caleb Schaffer, Providence Ariel Tavares. Providence Ariel Davey, Pawtucket Gisell Rodriguez, Providence Adriana Santana, Providence Funmibi Yusuff, Providence Shanna Wells, West Warwick Victor Baez, Providence Richard Sliwinski, Woonsocket Zooey Arnold-Conner, Providence Monica Whalen, Providence Michael O'Mara, Providence Deborah Del Gais, Providence Judith Dixon, Barrington Stephen Jarmie, Warwick Darvl Rabidoux, Rumford Sarah Schwartz, Providence Cassie Tharinger, Providence Nina Wolff Landau, Providence Sally Bozzuto, Providence Linda Sullivan, Riverside Lizmaylin Ramos, Providence Marie Hennedy, Warwick Nicole Eastwood, Johnston Erik-Dardan Ymeraga, Providence Crystal Lacouture Edwards, Pawtucket Joanne Rich, Providence Jessie Kingston, Providence Nick McKnight, Providence Helen Duffy, Providence Barbara Hunger, Providence Elizabeth Tuttle, Cranston Katherine Coumes, Providence Gregory Greco, Rumford Jane Angell, Wakefield James Vita, Providence

Donald Dailey, Pawtucket

Arthur Urbano, North Scituate Leah Wade, West Warwick Mary Field, Riverside Alex Denisevich, East Greenwich Matthew Thadeio, Warwick Rhonda Beaumier, Cranston Angel Lopez, Providence Ronny Carvalho, Central Falls Sherry Bernier, West Warwick Kate Gronner, Providence Jordan Mann, Providence Erika Munoz, Providence Molly Scavuzzo-Duggan, Providence Naomi Zeltzer, Providence Tracy Miller, Providence Hannah Resseger, Providence A Steinberg, Providence Zak Mettger, Providence Vernetta Brown, East Greenwich SueEllen Kroll, Providence Amy Borak, Providence Tristan Blount, Woonsocket Johnette Rodriguez, Wakefield Madi Garvin, East Providence Deborah Larsen, Cranston Pearl Holloway, Warwick Andrew Lohmeier, Cranston Elizabeth Garcia, Providence Alex Wambach, Providence Brianna Hoegler, Providence Tallie Massachi. Providence Arnav Adhikari, Providence Julia Huggins, Providence Lee Clasper-Torch, Providence Nathaniel Hardy, Cranston Jacqueline Betty, Lincoln DeeAnn Guo, Providence Kelley Gorman, Barrington Barbara Sylvia, Pawtucket Jen Kumar, Lincoln