



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

September 27, 2016

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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

We write to urge the Public Utilities Commission to adopt emergency regulations for the restoration of services to LIHEAP-eligible gas and electric utility customers. We respectfully ask the commission to take action, as the commission has for several years, by modifying the existing termination/restoration rules to provide the most-vulnerable consumers an achievable accommodation in order to ensure continued or renewed utility service heading into the winter months.

This past session the General Assembly passed legislation that made comprehensive changes to the Henry Shelton Act to make it easier for struggling families, particularly those transitioning from homeless to permanent housing, to earn forgiveness for utility debt. The legislation provides that customers whose utilities have already been disconnected make a 25% down payment in order to enroll in the plan, *unless the commission has adopted emergency regulations*.

We ask that the commission again take action, as contemplated in the Henry Shelton Act revisions, to help low income households restore gas and electric services and give them an opportunity to responsibly pay down their outstanding balances over time, saving other ratepayers the cost of unpaid bills that would otherwise be written off by the utility as uncollectable. Reasonable payment terms not only benefit all ratepayers, but also help those Rhode Islanders who suffer from energy insecurity.

We thank you for your continued commitment to balancing the needs of all ratepayers and respectfully ask that you consider the concerns of the consumer advocacy community who tirelessly represent our most vulnerable low-income households that include the disabled, the homeless, working poor and the elderly who are on a fixed income. Thank you in advance for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed

Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello

cc: Macky McCleary, PUC Administrator
Camilo Vivieros, George Wiley Center