

## RATEPAYERS ADVISORY BOARD

October 26, 2015

Dear Commissioners Curran, Roberti, and DeSimone:

The Ratepayers Advisory Board supports the request you received from Henry Shelton and Camilo Viveiros, of the George Wiley Center. Their letter was dated October 13, 2015.

They requested that the PUC institute an emergency regulation through the end of 2015, to allow restoration of service or to avoid termination for low income utility customers in the State. This will insure continual utility service as well as safeguarding public health as the cold season approaches.

Perhaps you are aware of the latest data on renters in R.I.; namely, that a two bedroom apartment costs on the average, \$1,172 a month. That would require a full time employee to make \$18.49 an hour. The reality is, however, the average income is \$12.48 each hour. In January, 2016, the minimum wage goes up to only \$9.60. Unfortunately, 52% of all renters spend far more than 30% on their rental space. Low income people oftentimes cannot afford rent, utilities, food, child care, any health care. Those struggling to pay bills do not earn enough. Something must be sacrificed. Often, families must feed the children, try to pay the rent, then may fall behind in other expenses, frequently, their utilities.

We must address the underlying issue of affordability for low/modest income families. In the meantime, we urge you to help a difficult challenge to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable citizens, by instituting this proposed emergency regulation.

Sincerely,

The Ratepayers Advisory Board: Elizabeth Morancy, Chair; Judy Jones, Vice Chair, Stephen Boyle, Kenneth Filarski; Virginia Gonsalves, Sandra Kelly, Melissa Husband; Frederick Sneesby, Vivian Weisman