



Docket 4450

3 Roxbury Ave.

11/25/13

Narragansett, Rhode Island 02882

Public Utilities Commission

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

To whom it may concern:

I would like to comment on the recent proposed changes to the rules governing utility terminations in Rhode Island. I speak as the recently retired Director of the Emergency Dental Clinic at the School of Dental Medicine of Tufts University. Presently I am a Jesuit Volunteer at the George Wiley Center in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

Across the board, these proposed changes represent a tightening of the rules regarding utility shut-offs. That is, far fewer people will be eligible for help of any kind – due to the redefinition downward of “financial hardship”, the shortening of the moratorium period, the minimizing of “protected status” customers – all these changes will obviously result in greater misery for the financially disadvantaged. All of this comes at a time when the state unemployment rate is rising – giving Rhode Island once again the second highest unemployment rate in the country.

My experience taking calls at the Wiley Center from utility customers with shut-off problems has revealed to me that the great majority of these people are the “working poor” – those with jobs which are low paying (yet at which they work just as long and hard as any of us), or have lost their jobs, or run out of unemployment benefits. These are not people “working the system” necessarily. To claim that they all are doing so is extremely naïve and morally wrong. The only party which stands to gain from these changes is the utility company.

I ask that the PUC delay voting on these new rules and allow more open meetings, particularly in my South County Area, to allow further discussion and thought before implementing these tough new measures.

Kevin L. Ryan D.M.D.

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