

United States Senate

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January 30, 2020

Ms. Marissa Gillett
Chair
Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
10 Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051

Dear Ms. Gillett:

I appreciate the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority's (PURA) investigation following my April 13, 2018 letter regarding customer disconnections by Eversource. As I noted in that letter, the rate of Eversource's customer disconnections has dramatically increased since 2015, despite an improving economy and a variety of hardship repayment programs for delinquent customers. Your Final Interim Decision of the Investigation into Distribution System Planning of the Electric Distribution Companies' Energy Affordability ("Decision") on December 18, 2019 bears out my initial concerns, and rightfully calls on Eversource and United Illuminating ("Companies") to take appropriate steps to ensure that families eligible for hardship protections are receiving them. I remain concerned, however, that the companies are not adequately complying with this directive, and I urge you to ensure that their call scripts and factsheets meet the spirit and intent of your directive.

Low-income customers who qualify for hardship status, specifically those who qualify for state or federal financial assistance, should always be protected from winter shut-offs between November 1 and May 1 under the Winter Protection Plan. PURA's decision found that the companies were not informing low-income customers of the existing Winter Protection Plan and other benefits of the "Hardship" coding in the companies' collections systems, resulting in unnecessary disconnections between November 1 and May 1. In addition, many low-income customers remained uninformed of the companies' utility arrearage forgiveness programs to help eligible customers maintain year-round service while paying down a delinquent balance on their bills.

PURA's decision required the companies to take three immediate-term measures: updating call center scripts for customer service representatives to address customers' questions, developing factsheets on repayment policies and procedures, and holding at least six informational hearings for members of the public in their service territories.

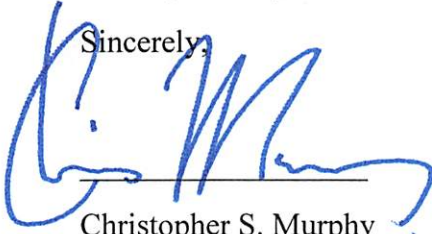
I am concerned that the call center scripts and factsheets submitted on January 17, 2020 by Eversource and United Illuminating do not sufficiently comply with PURA's decision, and that

hardship-eligible residents will continue to face disconnections because the companies are refusing to clearly and immediately inform them about the Winter Protection Plan and utility forgiveness programs. I encourage you to ensure that the companies either redo the call center scripts and factsheets to be consistent with your directive, or that you develop your own scripting and factsheets that the companies shall be required to use to properly inform customers of these resources.

Going forward, it is critical that the companies promptly improve customer outreach and take responsibility for informing customers of these regulatory protections.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator