



State of Connecticut
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August 27, 2020

Testimony for the Energy & Technology Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

Re: Informational Forum on Tropical Storm Isaias

To Chairmen Arconti and Needleman:

Thank you for holding this Informational Forum on the response to Tropical Storm Isaias, and for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the failure of Eversource to serve the communities I represent in the Northwest Corner of our state.

Connecticut consumers pay the highest electricity rates in the continental United States. In July, ratepayers, including homeowners, renters, and small businesses in my district, were shocked by the astronomic increases suddenly reflected in their bills, particularly at a time when all are grappling with the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19. Then came Tropical Storm Isaias, which laid bare the failures of Eversource management to meet our basic needs.

I represent a rural part of the state: the 64th District is the largest geographic district, including all or part of nine different towns. We are accustomed to the fact that our low density may not place us at the top of the priority list in terms of immediate power restoration but were stunned by the absolute failure to provide critical services or the most basic levels of communication with town officials in the aftermath of the Tropical Storm Isaias. During that time, I spoke repeatedly with chief elected officials, working tirelessly to ensure the safety of their residents and protection of critical infrastructure, who had received no communication from Eversource representatives: in some cases, not a single phone call from their liaison. We all spoke with constituents who had been told that trucks were in the area and that power would be restored within hours: there were no trucks, and there was no power.

Eversource's failures, both immediate and continued over the course of the next 10 days, put vulnerable residents and critical infrastructure at risk, and included:

- Failure to communicate meaningfully with chief elected officials about timing and available resources;
- Failure to provide accurate information to ratepayers about power restoration, in some cases sending out customer emails that were wildly out of touch with the facts on the ground;
- Failure to maintain adequate local workforce with knowledge of the electric systems in place;
- Failure to provide adequate make safe crews to ensure that dangerous conditions were urgently addressed and that emergency vehicles could pass;
- Failure to provide a reliable way for ratepayers to communicate service disruptions;
- Failure to make good faith efforts to compensate ratepayers for damages incurred;
- Failure to provide backup power for vulnerable residents and critical infrastructure.

The absence of resources committed to our towns has been in stark contrast to the tens of millions of dollars in compensation that we have seen flowing to top executives at Eversource, which suggests that their definition of success is not aligned with ours. To be clear, the linemen and other workers on the ground, who came to our communities from all over the country, did amazing work and we are grateful: I spoke with many of these workers who were equally frustrated by the poor communication and information they received as they tried to do their work. Their management let them down as well.

It is clear that the current regulatory system is failing consumers and it is time to re-configure that system. I applaud the policies this committee's leadership have introduced under the "Take Back Our Grid Act" and urge you to press most immediately for refunds to consumers for storm-related costs, increased local staffing that could make our communities safe in the immediate aftermath of a storm event, and a restructuring of the system of guaranteed profits for Eversource, replacing it with a system that links to performance.

Thank you,



Maria Horn
State Representative, 64th Assembly District