



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE STEPHEN HARDING, JR.
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RANKING MEMBER
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MEMBER
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

August 27, 2020

Re: 8/27/20 Informational Hearing RE: Storm Response and Utility Rate Increase

Dear Honorable Chairman Needleman Chairman Arconti, Honorable Ranking Members Formica and Ferraro, and Honorable Members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

First, thank you for conducting this Hearing today to discuss the actions/inactions of Eversource during this latest storm and the unacceptable utility rate increase requested by Eversource recently, as well. Investigations and hearings into both these matters are critically important. To say the least, Connecticut residents deserve far better from their utility company. They deserve honest and transparent answers, as well as concrete and significant plans regarding what will be done to ensure reasonable rates, and strong, quality service is provided.

In regards to the storm response, I have met constituents in my district who were out of power for over a week; many others were out for nearly that period of time, as well. Now we are 20 plus days removed from the Tropical Storm hitting our State, yet we are no closer to getting any answers from Eversource. In fact, their chief official never even addressed the residents of our State in public at any point during the outages. We as legislators hold an important responsibility to assist in the regulation of our State's utilities. As part of this role, we need to ensure that our utility companies and their officials are held accountable for lack of transparency and incompetence, both of which we saw from them in this latest storm. I would ask, on behalf of my constituents and neighbors, that significant actions be taken by our respective legislative bodies to hold these officials accountable for their unpreparedness and negligence. Also, I would ask that we this Committee collaborate with PURA to take the necessary steps to ensure that such negligence never happens again by any utility company in our State. Significant steps need to be taken by both entities in order to ensure the aforementioned for our residents.

In regards to the unacceptable rate increases levied by Eversource upon their customers, I thank PURA for suspending these rate increases and investigating these rate requests. I also thank this Committee and my fellow legislative colleagues for advocating said suspension and investigation. We, as legislators, should work with PURA to have them order the rebate to customers for the one month already paid with these unacceptable increases. As all of you know, we are in an unprecedented time in our State and Nation, a time in which many residents are unfortunately struggling financially. These individuals deserve to have this money back in their pockets, not in the hands of Eversource. In my opinion, a company paying their executive officials millions of dollars, making billions of dollars in profit, and being afforded a monopoly, in no way, shape or form deserves an increase in their rates. If anything, they should be discounting rates to our residents. We, as legislators, have an ability to craft legislation

and regulation to assist in necessary efforts to address unacceptable utility rates in our State. We need to act now in this regard.

In closing, significant action needs to be taken. Our State's Government in conjunction with PURA need to ensure that utility prices are fair, their services are good, and they are transparent and approachable to the customers they serve. It is wholly evident that the current situation we are in with Eversource is not even remotely close to where we need to be. We need to make significant change and it must begin immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S.G. Harding', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen G. Harding
State Representative 107th District