

**Testimony Given by John Collins to the Energy and Technology Committee
of the Connecticut General Assembly Concerning LCO 3916
September 8, 2020**

My name is John Collins. I am a Hebron selectman speaking for myself. The recent Tropical Storm Isaias caused many of the citizens of my town and district to be without power for almost a week. People in Andover, Bolton, Hebron and Marlborough and the region suffered during that week. Businesses and workers collectively lost tens millions of dollars. We heard little from Eversource. There was a lack of communication, sensitivity and care. Why would they care? They have a monopoly with a built-in, guaranteed profit. In a normal business, a company seeks to please their customers. Not here. The slow and largely tone-deaf response of Eversource to this storm is consistent with their overall performance.

In the weeks before the storm, our electricity rates almost doubled without notice. Without notice! The previous year, the Chairman of Eversource gave himself a hefty raise to \$19.6M. This is not a company or service that anyone would choose if they had a choice. Instead, the citizens of my towns are held hostage by Eversource. In a free market, a customer can choose. This is not a free market and it suffers because of that. The energy market is a government-given monopoly and the ills that we all endure can be traced to that fact.

The citizens of Connecticut want reliable, affordable and renewable energy. Our energy is not affordable. Our energy delivery is not reliable. And, our energy is largely not renewable. Eversource is the inevitable result of policy, that according to a recent article in the Connecticut Mirror, was "...focused on short-term costs and energy rates instead of long-term solutions that could eventually lower those rates and provide more storm resilience."¹ It was focused on short-term shareholder value for the benefit of executive compensation and not on customer service or development of a sustainable energy system. Innovation has been in short supply. For example, two central parts of their business - wires on poles and tree cutting - have not changed since the 19th century.

The Take Back Our Grid Act is a good first step. However, long-term, we need wholesale change and a new strategy and business model to deliver energy. We need competition in the energy market. We need to shift from the cost of business model to a performance-based model. We need a regulatory environment that supports innovation and development of carbon-free energy systems. And, we need an energy company who will partner with us and that cares about its customers.

¹ Spiegel, J.E., August 27, 2020. Connecticut Mirror. <https://ctmirror.org/2020/08/27/should-keeping-the-power-on-not-getting-it-back-on-be-goal-in-ct/> Accessed September 5, 2020.