

Sept. 7, 2020

Dear Chairs Arconti and Needleman, Vice-Chair Allie-Brennan and Esteemed Colleagues of the Energy and Technology Committee:

My name is Anne Hughes, State Representative of the 135<sup>th</sup> District of Easton, Weston, Redding. You have heard hours of testimony of the epic repeated failures of the power monopolies to prepare adequately and respond satisfactorily to the extreme weather events that are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity, in part because of the climate crisis accelerated by greenhouse gases and fossil fuel emissions worldwide. You have also listened to the underwhelming responses by the CEO's, Jim Judge, UI CEO Anthony Marone, and their respective managers, who failed to take robust or radical responsibility for their monopoly's failures. Instead, defended their appalling compensations and rate hikes in spite of customers paying the highest energy costs in the country, and their callous disregard for the suffering of thousands, characterized as 'inconvenient and frustrating', allowing they 'could do better with communication' during the recent weeklong outages during a global pandemic.

What I heard was a lack of will to prioritize customer service and protections first. So clearly, that has become this (part-time) legislature's role: to put the public service and protections first. Award a LOT more authority and oversight to PURA to regulate these corporate exploiters of rate-payers for profit, and create robust systems of accountability:

- 1) Power companies must bear the costs of burying the power lines of those communities most impacted by the prolonged power outages, those communities with dense and aging trees, that all the regular pruning all year long won't prevent widespread havoc on the above ground lines in these intense wind storms. I know it's not cheap, if it was, they would have done it by now, like they should have, 10 years ago following Tropical Storm Irene and many subsequent storms, when they 'pledged' to harden the grid. They didn't. This IS the power companies' recompense for exploiting ratepayers and putting them in harm's way.
- 2) Break 'Em Up. Giver ratepayers real choices in performance-based power sources. Strengthen the regulatory structure and PURA's authority to intervene with attempts to overcharge for costs of power delivery to this small state, to overcompensate CEO's for exploiting ratepayers and taking advantage of the complex power delivery system to obfuscate charges and sneak in recovery of costs from storms and remedial grid work that should have been invested in long ago.
- 3) Empower Consumer Advocate on the Board of Directors, maintain Probation Watchdog status over every move in the aftermath of negligent performance and order compensation to ratepayers for losses.
- 4) Claw back rate increases and overcharges, with fines and credits to ratepayers immediately.
- 5) Renew the solar and renewable energy homeowner and small businesses credits and subsidies, so that people can transition away from negligent and exploitive power monopolies and become self-reliant on power that is finally affordable and credits oversupplies back to the community grid to store for power outages: neighbors taking care of neighbors.
- 6) Restore and maintain minimum in-state frontline staffing and regional centers to handle emergencies. Climate change is real, it is intensifying. We know better, it's time to act better. The power companies have shown themselves to be protecting their shareholders and CEO's bottom lines. We can no longer afford that status quo. The Legislature must now do OUR job:

We must stay in Special Session as long as it takes to enact REAL accountability and Change in this status quo.

The public is tired of subsidizing corporate greed that delivers sluggish, expensive power and negligible service. It's time to make PUBLIC utilities PUBLIC again. As elected PUBLIC officials, that is just what we intend to do now.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Rep. Anne Hughes, 135<sup>th</sup> District