



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE Informational Listening Session September 8, 2020

Testimony

RE: LCO No. 3920: AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY RESPONSE BY ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES AND REVISING THE REGULATION OF OTHER PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Storm Response is always stressful. Electricity has become our lifeline and it's expected loss is inconvenient. But Eversource's response caused power outages to move from inconvenient to downright dangerous.

In major storms, it is reasonable to triage repairs. Hospitals, medical facilities, emergency responsive locations should all be at the top of that list. Towns and cities have identified these priorities for Eversource. Local officials have indicated these locations were not prioritized. In one instance electricity to a pump station that provides water to 14,000 people was forced to operate on a generator for 4 days. Only due to the dedication and creativity of local employees was the system able to operate on a generator. One mechanical failure would have found 14,000 people without water. No water during a pandemic when handwashing is a priority to stop the spread of disease could have resulted in a public health disaster. In another instance, a week after the storm the power lines responsible for a sewage pump was still down in a field. Again, only due to town staff who were already stretched incredibly thin, was this critical resource maintained and a public health issue averted. These are just 2 examples of Eversource failures.

Communication, or the lack of, compounded the difficulty with storm response on the local level. Emergency Operations Commanders did not clear have coordination with local crews. Townspeople had difficulty even lodging outage notifications. Town officials could not get accurate and updated information from their Eversource contacts. Tickets were cleared without being completed. Outage repair expectations were not updated so residents and businesses could plan accordingly. And, in at least one instance, Eversource told a public facility they did not know where they were located.

Raising rates is not the answer. A utility company that holds a virtual monopoly on the state of Connecticut, and beyond, has obligations to the people it serves.