



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
General Court

October 11, 2022

Matthew H. Nelson, Chair
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

Re: Winter Energy Rate Increases

Dear Chair Nelson:

We write to convey our deep concerns related to the proposed energy rate increases for this winter season as multiple investor-owned utilities seek to saddle drastic cost increases on our constituents.¹ As the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is the oversight entity for investor-owned utilities in the Commonwealth, we implore you to protect Massachusetts residents from these rate increases.²

As the basis for increasing rates, these utilities have cited Russia's invasion of Ukraine, inflation, and other factors; however, our constituents already feel the impacts of these macro-economic factors. They encounter them when they buy groceries, fill up their car, or pay for medical expenses. Under the proposed rates, keeping themselves warm during the winter would be just another heightened cost passed along to Massachusetts residents.

It is also important to highlight the fact that this rate increase is being proposed on top of significant energy cost increases already imposed on Massachusetts residents within the last year. As noted by DPU:

The Department is very concerned with the energy burden on customers and the increased costs of all energy sources. Gasoline, propane, oil, natural gas, and electricity costs have all significantly increased over the last year. The Department agrees, however, that the increase in electric supply costs is particularly concerning. While natural gas customers are expected to experience about a 20 percent bill increase due to rising natural gas supply costs, the electric

¹ See e.g., Many Mass. Customers Will See a 64% Increase in Their Electric Bills This Winter, NBC 10 Boston (September 21, 2022) available at: <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/some-massachusetts-customers-will-see-a-64-increase-in-their-electric-bills-this-winter/284963/>.

See also Another New England-based utility company announces massive rate hike ahead of winter season, Boston 25 News (September 28, 2022) available at: <https://www.boston25news.com/news/local/another-new-england-based-utility-company-announces-massive-rate-hike-ahead-winter-season/E3WPDYLPIVEVFIBBXUBPKCRZKY/>.

² As you know, DPU's priorities are set by law. Specifically, "[DPU] shall, with respect to itself and the entities it regulates, prioritize safety, security, reliability of service, affordability, equity and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions . . ." M.G.L. 25, § 1A.

supply costs through National Grid's Basic Service are expected to increase an average residential customer's electric bill by over 80 percent from current rates.³

According to estimates by the Department of Energy Resources, this winter will be colder than last year while the "cost of heating for residential customers is expected to be 28.6% higher for homes heating with natural gas, 18.6% higher for heating oil, 3.0% for propane, and 54.6% for electric heating."⁴

We echo the Attorney General's concerns with these proposed rate increases.⁵ In addition, proposed rate increases of this magnitude – during the winter season – would disproportionately impact the Commonwealth's most vulnerable. Moreover, protecting our residents from the cold is not just an affordability and equity concern – it is also a public safety issue. As the oversight agency tasked with prioritizing safety, affordability, and equity with regard to energy rates, we ask that DPU do just that and protect Massachusetts residents from these drastic rate increases this winter season.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Senator Michael O. Moore

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Second Hampden and Hampshire District

Senator Diana DiZoglio

First Essex District

Senator Joanne M. Comerford

Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester District

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³ Response of the Department of Public Utilities to the Letter filed by the Office of the Attorney General on September 21, 2022, (September 27, 2022) available at: <https://fileservice.cea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/15519025>

⁴ Massachusetts Household Heating Costs, Estimate of Energy Prices for Heating Fuels During 2022/23 Winter Heating Season <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-household-heating-costs>

⁵ Letter on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General (September 21, 2022) available at: <https://fileservice.cea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/15517839>

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