

Utility Affordability Task Force Needed to Address Ramifications of COVID19 Pandemic and to Protect Hoosiers

Governor Eric Holcomb must act now to address the financial cliff that is coming once emergency orders are lifted, specifically the moratorium on utility disconnects.

Because of the COVID19 pandemic, utilities are rightfully keeping many customers connected even though they may not be able to pay their monthly bills. Many of these customers are incurring arrearages (money owed to the utilities) that they may not be able to pay immediately because of the high unemployment due to the stay-at-home orders.

Action is needed to ensure that customers who incur these arrearages during the COVID19 crisis are protected from disconnections once the emergency orders are lifted.

In order to protect Hoosiers, Gov. Holcomb should extend the disconnect moratorium until new consumer protection guidelines are put into place. Furthermore, he should require all utility service providers, both regulated and unregulated, to adopt more flexible credit and collections practices than are currently required by state regulations or internal utility policy related to credit and collection practices.

CAC calls on Governor Holcomb to immediately establish a Utility Affordability Task Force with the stated goal of ensuring all Hoosier consumers have uninterrupted access to essential utility services and are able to remain comfortably and safely in their own homes.

Recommended consumer protections should:

- Extend the utility disconnect moratorium until new consumer protection guidelines are put in place
- Eliminate any customer deposit requirements
- Allow flexible, reasonable payment plans that are based on the customer's ability to pay
- Eliminate down payment requirements on payment plan arrangements
- Eliminate any requirement that disconnected customers pay the full arrearage in order to reconnect
- Require utilities to forgive debt for consumers who certify that they are eligible for LIHEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program), even if they are unable to receive LIHEAP due to insufficient LIHEAP funds
- Prohibit utilities from imposing late fees and engaging in negative credit reporting
- Eliminate minimum balance requirements for prepaid utility service customers

Financially struggling Hoosiers are dealing with an unprecedented shutdown of the economy resulting in:

- Record unemployment
- Food insecurity
- Disproportionate health impacts by race and zip code
- Unanticipated financial obligations due to the COVID19 pandemic.



We are just beginning to understand the extent and length of the economic fallout resulting from the pandemic. **Particularly hard hit are the most vulnerable Hoosiers:** people on low- or fixed-incomes, i.e. **senior citizens, people with disabilities, and children.**

We must put in place consistent statewide rules which apply to ALL utilities and which recognize that the utilities have an obligation to serve ALL customers.

Take Action!

Contact Gov. Holcomb and urge him to protect Hoosiers by:

- Creating a task force to ensure all Indiana utility customers have uninterrupted access to essential utility services during and after the emergency stay-at-home orders put in place due to the COVID19 pandemic.
- Extending the utility disconnect moratorium until new consumer protection guidelines are put in place.

Gov. Holcomb

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