

**Citizens Action Coalition \* Indiana Coalition for Human Services  
Indiana Community Action Association \* Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter**

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**Human Service and Public Interest Advocates Agree to  
Settlement with I&M and Other Parties in Rate Case**

***Low-Income Bill Assistance and Reduced Monthly Fixed Charge Secured in Agreement***

INDIANAPOLIS -- Feb. 14, 2018 -- Citizens Action Coalition (CAC), Indiana Coalition for Human Services (ICHHS), Indiana Community Action Association (INCAA), and the Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter joined a settlement reached by all parties in the I&M base rate case. The settlement was filed today with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC). The agreement remains subject to review and approval by the IURC.

In their pre-filed testimony in the case, the advocates expressed grave concerns over I&M's request to significantly increase the monthly fixed charge on residential customers from the existing level of \$7.30 to \$18.00. If approved by the IURC, the settlement will establish a monthly charge of \$10.50 for most residential customers, well below what the company was seeking.

"Our top priority in the case was to address the monthly fixed charge and what we viewed as an unreasonable request by the company," stated Kerwin Olson, Executive Director of CAC. "We are pleased that we were able to work with I&M to negotiate a substantial reduction in this charge to a more manageable and reasonable level."

Additional concerns were raised over the day to day struggles faced by fixed- and low-income households, which include challenges with affording their monthly electric bills. "Indiana's poverty rate is still higher than it was before the recession and one in three Hoosiers live in a household where they cannot afford all of their basic needs," said Jessica Fraser, Director of the Indiana Institute for Working Families, a program of INCAA. The advocates recommended that I&M create a low-income bill assistance program and an arrearage management program to ease the burden on these vulnerable populations.

These concerns were echoed and reinforced by over 150 I&M customers who provided oral or written testimony before the IURC at three field hearings held in Ft. Wayne, Muncie, and South Bend, as well as in over 2,700 written comments filed with the Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC).

“Hoosiers from all walks of life shared their stories and voiced their concerns for their clients, friends and neighbors who are having a tough time getting by,” said Emily Weikert Bryant, President of the ICHS Board of Directors. “The low-income provisions contained within the settlement reflect that these voices were heard.”

The terms secured in the settlement to begin addressing the payment difficulties experienced by low-income customers include:

- A two-year Low Income Arrearage Forgiveness Pilot Program will be established that will provide an opportunity for low income customers to catch up on their electric bills.
- A two-year Neighbor to Neighbor pilot program will be established under which I&M’s customers will be given an opportunity to voluntarily contribute on their electric bills to a fund that will be used to assist eligible low-income customers with their regular monthly electric bills. I&M will contribute \$50,000 in seed money to help kick start the Neighbor to Neighbor Pilot Program.
- A two-year pilot program will be established, under which I&M will provide \$250,000 in funding to assist low income customers in I&M’s Indiana service area in paying electricity bills, primarily during the winter heating season.
- I&M will provide \$150,000 to facilitate low-income weatherization in I&M’s Indiana service territory performed by the community action agencies.

“Sierra Club has agreed to sign this settlement because it represents a much smaller rate increase than I&M requested and minimizes the increase in the monthly fixed charge, which can be a barrier to energy efficiency and customer-owned solar power,” said Steve Francis, an I&M customer and energy committee chair for Sierra Club’s Hoosier Chapter. “Also, through this settlement, I&M has agreed to test new programs to provide relief for low-income customers struggling to pay their bills, and to work with South Bend and Fort Wayne on programs we support, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, energy-efficient streetlights and energy efficiency in low-income neighborhoods.”

The settlement and related documents are available upon request.

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