

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Patty Kidder and I live with my husband in the village of Springvale located in the city of Sanford. I am here to testify in favor of LD 1949: An Act Regarding Energy Fairness.

My life turned upside down in June 2009 when my husband lost his living wage job he had for over 20 years because Spencer Press, then owned by the international corporation, R R Donnelly, closed its doors for good. Since he was an IT Specialist, we thought he would find another job but he was partly disabled and companies didn't want to risk the increase in their health insurance budget to give him a chance.

His health deteriorated and he was found 100% disabled in 2015. I am only able to work part-time as I am partly disabled and I need to care for my husband and I help take care of my 4 year old grandchild. Our income is low and we had to supplement our wood stove with electric space heaters during the winter of 2022-23. Our CMP bill was sky high that winter and we couldn't afford to pay it and all of our other living expenses.

We were just 1 of the 440,000 CMP customers that received a disconnection notice Spring 2023. I was able to set us up on a payment plan only to have some unexpected expenses cause us to default. I called back and after a lot of pleading, I convinced the CMP worker to have their supervisor call me back. I was able to set up a second payment arrangement because of my husband's disabilities and my persistence.

In order to be able to honor the payment arrangement, I made the difficult decision to retire early and start collecting my social security benefits. We were on a low fixed income and it was the only way we could quickly increase our monthly income enough to not default again. I wanted to wait until I reached full retirement age which for me (currently, before they screw with it again) is 66 years & 8 months and won't happen until the end of August this year.

We thought it would be enough fixed income for us to begin to breathe a little easier but last winter our propane heater broke. We had to fall back on the electric space heaters to keep us warm until we had enough money to fix our main heat source. Our monthly electric bill jumped from \$140 to \$640 and it was still \$400 the following month until our heater was fixed. This month it was back down to \$144 which we can manage but because of our health conditions, we will need to use our air conditioner and heat pump this summer and it will cause our bill to rise again.

Both my husband and I have sleep apnea and use CPAP machines every night to keep our blood oxygen at a safe level all night. It keeps us alive and allows us to get a good nights sleep. Before I was diagnosed, my oxygen level dropped to 76% and I was waking up to breathe, every 75 SECONDS, all night long. The machines have changed our lives but they need electricity to work and I'm concerned about what could happen to us if we can't afford to pay our power bill for some unforeseen event.

We have done what we can to increase our income and cut our budget but we still haven't been able to even come close to our household income before Spencer Press closed in 2009. We are just one unplanned major expense away from financial disaster and I can't even think about what is going to happen when one of us dies. Neither one of us can afford to live on just our own Social Security monthly benefit.

I have a good friend who has been declared 100% disabled and is on fixed income. She has many health conditions and last winter her heating system failed and she didn't have any money to fix it. She heated her house all winter with space heaters and even though she kept the temperature at 55 degrees, she owes several thousand dollars to CMP. They will be disconnecting her electricity before the end of the month unless a miracle happens. She will be 64 this summer and she spent last winter shivering under 5 blankets while sitting in her living room. That ain't right!

LD 1949 will help low and moderate income families keep their lights ON and in this day and age, I believe electricity is a Necessity! It is as necessary as health care and a place to live. Thank you for your time and I urge you to vote, "Ought to Pass" on An Act Regarding Energy Fairness.

Sincerely,

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