



DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20TH DISTRICT

August 19, 2020

Public Service Commission
Hills Farms State Office Building
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705

Re: Disconnection of Customers for Non-Payment (PSC REF#: 394202)

Chairperson Valcq, Commissioners Nowak and Commissioner Huebner,

I am writing to comment on my belief the PSC would be making an error if it were to reinstate or continue any disconnection moratorium at an upcoming meeting. It is an error for two reasons: equity and policymakers' actions.

First, the end result of a disconnection moratorium is to inequitably force some ratepayers to subsidize others. Utilities are regulated monopolies, obligated to provide a service at a promised level of reimbursement. Any chargeable cost a utility bears is ultimately repaid through the ratepayers. In March 2020 it was, perhaps, a wise policy to freeze any utility disconnection for non-payment due to the suspension of orderly society around the nation. The practical and legal obstructions to ordinary life and economic activity no longer exist to the same degree. Historic stimulus has been, and continues to be, distributed through various means at all levels of the Wisconsin economy.

Protection from disconnection for nonpayment alters incentives. The rational response to these incentives, from a subset of energy users, will likely result in increased delinquency. Utilities financially harmed by the PSC mandating encumbrance of such costs will righteously demand reimbursement for their losses. Ultimately, ordinary Wisconsinites struggling with life in a pandemic themselves, will foot the bill for PSC-underwritten scofflaw behavior.

Second, and more fundamentally, a statewide moratorium on disconnections is a public policy issue. I do not dispute the PSC's legal authority to act in this letter, but I suggest the best place to weigh this policy choice is in the elected branches of government. The current state of emergency empowers the Governor to issue another disconnection order like he did earlier this year. It has been nearly three weeks since the emergency declaration with no sign of action. The Legislature has also not acted on this issue. I request you carefully consider this bipartisan inaction. When policymakers seek a return to the *status quo ante*, inaction is frequently the tool used. I respectfully submit observation of the elected branches evinces a decision to let this policy expire. Continuation of this policy is not good for Wisconsin. Thank you for your attention.

Duey Stroebel