

**From:** [Max Savishinsky](#)  
**To:** [Danner, Dave \(UTC\)](#); [Rendahl, Ann \(UTC\)](#); [Balasbas, Jay \(UTC\)](#); [UTC DL Records Center](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on Docket # U-200281 - Utility Shut Offs  
**Date:** Friday, September 11, 2020 1:28:30 PM

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Re: Docket # U-200281

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Docket # U-200281.

My name is Max Savishinsky and I am the Executive Director of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (WPSR). WPSR is a 40 year-old physician-led advocacy organization working to create a more peaceful, sustainable, economically-just, and healthy state for all Washingtonians.

Economic inequity and lack of access to basic resources are root causes of poor health. In the midst of a public health and economic crisis, uninterrupted access to utilities - including water, energy, and telecommunications - is essential to protecting the economic wellbeing, health, and lives of our residents.

The World Health Organization has identified access to clean water for hydration, hand hygiene, and sanitation as [critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19](#). With the recent unprecedented high temperatures, smoke-filled air, and continued need for social distancing, access to electricity to stay cool indoors is a matter of public safety. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, our communities must have access to up-to-date public health information via the internet. To mitigate the catastrophic health impacts of the economic crisis, people must have access to remote education and employment opportunities, and online social benefit applications.

Extending the moratorium on utility shut-offs is an essential first step to protecting the health of our residents, but it is not enough. **Utility debt must not just be deferred but forgiven for low-income people.** With record levels of unemployment, many in our communities will not have the economic resources to weather a tidal-wave of debt following the pandemic.

Everyday inside clinics and hospitals across Washington state, our members see firsthand the devastating impact of poverty and lack access to basic resources in the health inequities of their patients. The Utilities and Transportation Commission has the opportunity to protect the health of our residents and support efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 across our state by providing debt-free utility services throughout and beyond this pandemic. **We therefore call on the Utilities and Transportation Commission to do everything in its power to ensure that all Washington residents have access to stable, debt-free utility service during this**

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**pandemic and beyond.** This includes:

- Extending the moratorium on utility shut-offs to at least April 30, or whenever all the counties in a utility's service territory have been in Phase 4 of Washington's Safe Start Plan for at least 60 days.
- No debt for poor and working class families
- Just payment plans for all utilities
- No late fees, disconnection fees, or reporting to credit agencies
- Ratepayers should not have to pay for all COVID costs during this global crisis -- utilities must consider cutting executive and/or shareholder pay to ensure people's basic health and safety.

Thank you,

Max Savishinsky, EdD, MPA, MAIS

**Executive Director**, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

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