

Chiles, Pam (UTC)

From: Karen Cowgill (kdcowgill@gmail.com) Sent You a Personal Message <automail@knowwho.com>
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Dear Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission,

As the COVID-19 crisis exposes cracks in our social and economic systems, it's crucial that we protect the most vulnerable populations while advancing our vision of a healthy, safe future with clean energy for all. Mounting utility bill debts and the many barriers to accessing the limited assistance currently available will only hinder individuals' and family's ability to recover from the serious and continuing loss of income and health impacts of this crisis. This is an investment in the short-term and long-term well-being of Washington State and all its residents. We have an opportunity and an obligation to make sure that we are protecting those hardest hit by this crisis, and to remake our economy so it doesn't continue to exacerbate racial and economic inequality or the ongoing climate crisis.

I am writing to ask the Utilities and Transportation Commission extend the moratorium on utility shut offs until at least September.

It is now clear: the moratorium saves lives. A recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that the coronavirus infection rates last year were 4.4% lower in communities that banned electricity and water service disconnections during the pandemic, while death rates from the disease were 7.4% lower.

Almost a year into the COVID crisis, it is clearer than ever that the effects of the pandemic are not going away anytime soon. We need to act on people's needs instead of those of profitable utility companies. Right now, up to 2.2 million people in Washington -- almost one-third of the state -- could be struggling to pay for food, according to recent reports. You have the power to ensure that we don't compound their suffering by turning off their electricity, too.

Washington can be a state where everyone -- no matter their race, income, or where they live -- has access to electricity. This is a state where people's health and well being, not corporate profits, can drive policymakers' decisions. Utilities are more essential than ever to keep our communities healthy and safe. Together, we must make sure that Washingtonians can count on essential utilities throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Please, keep the lights on.

Sincerely,

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