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Energy and Technology Committee Hearing

March 16, 2010

Testimony of Shirley Bergert¹

Regarding RB 460, AN ACT CONCERNING LOW INCOME ENERGY RATES

Recommended Action: Adopt.

This bill is identical to section 1 of HB 5505 and deserves support. The need to develop affordable utility rates has been well-documented. Based on 2009 data, analysis prepared for Operation Fuel indicated:

The average annual shortfall between actual and affordable home energy bills for households [in Connecticut] at or below 185% of FPL [federal poverty level] now reaches over \$2,550 per household. The aggregate Home Energy Affordability Gap in Connecticut now reaches nearly \$585 million statewide. This \$585 million is not the total low-income home energy bill in Connecticut. Rather, the \$585 million is the affordability Gap, the dollar amount by which actual home energy bills exceed affordable home energy bills.²

This bill directs the DPUC to take an in depth look at developing a discounted rate for low income households purchasing utility service from CL&P, UI, Yankee Gas, CNG or SCG, reviewing options for reducing the cost of such a rate. Unaffordable rates for these households have led to increased utility terminations with serious health and safety consequences. "Even when low-income households pay their bills in a full and timely manner, they often suffer significant adverse hunger, education, employment, health and housing consequences in order to make such payments."³

¹ Shirley Bergert serves: on the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16a-41b); as the residential representative on the Energy Conservation Management Board overseeing the expenditure of ratepayer conservation funds in Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16-245m); as the low income representative on the Fuel Oil Conservation Board (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16a-22I); and on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University.

² Roger D. Colton, *HOME ENERGY AFFORDABILITY GAP: 2009*, p.1 (Jan. 2010). A copy of this report is available at: <http://www.operationfuel.org/publications/Connecticut-HEAG--2009--with-appendices.pdf>.

³ Id.

