



# CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES

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## Energy and Technology Committee Hearing

February 23, 2010

Testimony of Shirley Bergert

Regarding HB 5216

### AN ACT CONCERNING UTILITY TERMINATION FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH A MEMBER LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS OLD

**Recommended Action: Adopt.**

**This proposed bill amends CGS §16-262c(b)(1) to preclude use of termination of utility service as a collection tactic to households with children under the age of two years. It recognizes the special vulnerabilities of infants when necessary utility service is at risk. It is particularly dangerous for young children who may be ill. Adopting this provision will not preclude utility companies from utilizing other approaches to collection of utility bills.**

There are special concerns where infants and toddlers are in a home:

- Infants and toddlers are more vulnerable to hyper- and hypothermia. The winter moratorium bill was adopted by the legislature after a baby froze to death. Babies can also suffer from high levels of heat.
- Infants who are dependent on formula need sanitary conditions and appropriate food storage to safely eat.
- Infants and toddlers have immature immune systems, making them more vulnerable to illness if they live in households where there is inadequate heat or cooling, where food cannot be safely stored or prepared or sanitary conditions cannot be maintained.
- Where an infant or toddler is ill or recovering from illness, s/he is at potentially grievous risk if utility service is not maintained. Contacts at Children's Hospital have seen cases where children cannot be safely discharged because of a lack of necessary service.

These vulnerabilities should be taken into account in public policy. Eliminating utility service termination in these situations can be life-saving.

