

**TESTIMONY OF CONNECTICUT NATURAL GAS CORPORATION AND THE SOUTHERN
CONNECTICUT GAS COMPANY**

**Bill 5216 - AN ACT CONCERNING UTILITY TERMINATION FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH A
MEMBER LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS OLD.**

Good Afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello and Members of the Committee. My name is James McNally and I am Director of Customer Service for Connecticut Natural Gas Corporation (CNG) and The Southern Connecticut Gas Company (SCG). Thank you for this opportunity to testify on raised Bill 5216 - An Act Concerning Utility Termination For Households With A Member Less Than Twenty-Four Months Old.

We believe current Connecticut law and regulation provides customers with ample opportunity to obtain help and assistance to avoid termination of utility service and therefore we do not support this raised bill. A customer having difficulty paying their bill can today prevent termination in several ways; by making a payment arrangement on their account, by demonstrating that they do not have the financial resources to pay the bill and being protected under the winter moratorium, or by providing a doctor's note certifying that the termination would create an untenable medical situation. The utilities work with their customers every day to avoid terminating service and we also conduct significant outreach in communicating the available assistance to customers.

Because these measures already in law to protect our vulnerable customers we oppose creating an additional exemption from termination. We also feel that there may be unintended negative consequences from enacting this bill. For example, if households with infants are automatically exempt from termination, they may not avail themselves of energy assistance that they may qualify for or participate in the Matching Payment plan which helps reduce their back balances. They may have no incentive to contact the utility to make payment arrangements. Once the infant protection expires for that household, the gas bills will have built up over time. We all have seen throughout the years that customers can get so far behind on their bills that they give up and can never catch up. This additional exemption may indeed lead to even higher uncollectible expense, which ultimately results in higher rates for all of Connecticut's residents.

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the proposed legislation on behalf of CNG/SCG. We stand ready to work with this Committee to address the concerns that are raised and considered in the discussion of this Bill.

Thank you.