STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITY CONTROL

THE ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

House Bill 5216: AAC UTILITY TERMINATION FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH A MEMBER LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS OLD

February 23, 2010

TESTIMONY OF CHAIRMAN KEVIN M. DELGOBBO

The Department of Public Utility Control (Department) would caution against adopting the provisions of House Bill No. 5216. While this proposal is most laudable in its intent, we believe it could have significant adverse consequences for all ratepayers. The Department believes that the state can be proud of the very substantial and broad protections currently held by the law with respect to prohibitions against termination of utility service. Nonetheless, the Department is vigilant of where the law may fall short such as in our recommendation to amend C.G.S. § 16-262c(b)(1) which we have been advocating for a few years now. C.G.S. § 16-262c(b)(1) does not sufficiently protect hardship customers during the moratorium who move from one franchise area to another during the moratorium period. We are trying to fix that situation in our technical correction bill, SB No.182.

As we review the current law, we note an almost blanket prohibition against utility service terminations during the winter months for individuals demonstrating financial hardship. In addition, current law also provides for a prohibition against utility service termination at ANY time of the year for a residential customer who has financial hardship and the result of the termination would cause a life threatening situation for themselves or a member of their family. The intent of this bill would appear to be an attempt to provide a protection for a vulnerable population that the Department believes already exists. To the extent that the proposal would provide an additional and unequivocal prohibition in households where a child under twenty-four months resides, it exposes all other ratepayers to the additional costs of providing that service. Such a provision could ultimately result in creating the unintended consequence of being to the detriment of the financially strapped customer who may never catch up, or to all customers who will see their rates increase as a result.

This bill on its face is clearly a policy decision to be made by the legislature. The Department stands ready to fully implement such provisions in the best manner possible should it become law.

The Department looks forward to working with this Committee to address the issues presented by this proposal.

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