

TESTIMONY OF DREW RANKIN, CEO
CONNECTICUT MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ENERGY COOPERATIVE (CMEEC)

SB 110, AN ACT CONCERNING FRAUD PREVENTION IN
CONNECTICUT'S UTILITY TERMINATION PROTECTION PROGRAMS

ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 20, 2014

Senator Duff, Representative Reed, Senator Chapin and Representative Hoydick, I am Drew Rankin, the CEO of the Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative (CMEEC). I regret that I am unable to participate in the hearing today but do want to comment on this most important issue.

CMEEC is owned by the municipal utilities in the cities of Groton and Norwich, the Borough of Jewett City and the Second and Third Taxing Districts of the City of Norwalk. Together we represent about 6% of the load in Connecticut and have successfully supplied low cost, reliable power to our customers for many years.

We fully agree with the protections put in place by the legislature some time ago to protect against electricity shutoff for people with serious or life threatening illnesses (SILTS). However, we have a concern that a growing number of our customers are using this policy to avoid paying their electric bills.

While this problem impacts the investor owned utilities, it is having a greater impact on the smaller municipal utilities. Today you will hear specific details from some of our member company officials who have first-hand experience with customers attempting to defraud the system.

Over the last several months our members and CL&P and UI representatives have met with administration officials, legislators and stakeholders in an effort to convey the importance of this issue not only for us but, more importantly, for our customers. We have listened to their concerns and suggestions and believe the bill before you takes a balanced approach keeping in mind the needs of the truly needy while making it more difficult to commit fraud.

Our ability to provide the low cost reliable power our customers have come to enjoy will be threatened should abuse be allowed to continue. Someone must pay the bill. Every dollar lost to fraud is a dollar that must be recovered elsewhere, either through higher charges to other customers or less money spent on our infrastructure. Too often the person most impacted is the hard working, low income person who is struggling to pay their bill. They should not have to shoulder more of the burden because of others seeking to avoid payment.

In closing, I again want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue. I welcome the opportunity for further dialogue with committee members.