

**Testimony of Heidi Obach  
Before the Energy and Technology Committee**

*In Support of SB570, An Act Concerning Electric Savings and Fixed Bill Fees*, and related bills capping the fixed charge for customers of electric distribution companies.

Submitted by Heidi Obach, Uconn Graduate Employee Union, UAW Local 6950

February 24, 2015

Senator Paul Doyle, Representative Lonnie Reed, and distinguished members of the committee:

I provide this testimony to support passage of legislation that would lower and cap the fixed charge for electric service for residential customers at \$10 per month. Currently, Connecticut's residential customers pay some of the highest monthly fixed charges of any major electric utility in the region. The increase in the fixed charge by Eversource (formerly known as CL&P) represents a step in the wrong direction for Connecticut's economy and environment. High fixed rates are problematic for two basic reasons. First, they are unfair and regressive. Second, they exacerbate the problem of climate change by removing the economic incentive for consumers to conserve energy.

Fixed charges function like a flat tax which disproportionately hurts the most economically vulnerable residents of CT. Earning less than \$20,000 per year on average, graduate employees, such as myself, are among the low wage workers who really feel the squeeze when utility bills increase. We are also scientists and social scientists who understand the consequences of failing to confront climate change. By increasing the fixed portion of the utility bill, Eversource has reduced the ability of customers to reap the financial benefits of conserving energy, disincentivizing the type of consumer behavior that is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Conversely, reducing and capping the fixed rate gives the consumer a larger variable component of their bill, which puts the economic interests of consumers in line with the general interests of the environment—less energy use. For each of these reasons, I urge you to please act on SB570 and support legislation to reduce and cap the fixed electric rate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
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