

**Testimony of Todd Vachon**  
**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 Todd Vachon, Uconn Graduate Employee Union, UAW Local 6950

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

I am writing to support passage of legislation that would lower and cap the fixed charge for electric service for residential customers at \$10 per month and for small business customers at \$25 per month. Connecticut's residential customers now pay some of the highest monthly fixed charges of any major electric utility in the region. The recent 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 charges for electricity are unfair and regressive; they function like a flat tax which disproportionately hurts the poorest residents of CT. Earning less than \$20,000 per year on average, my fellow graduate employees and me are among the low wage workers who truly feel the squeeze when basic 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, thus 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, the part they have some control over and can reduce by reducing their usage—a win for both the consumer and the environment.

A large fixed rate represents an abuse of monopoly power by profit hungry electric companies whose incentives under the current economic model are not to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or do what is best for consumers, but rather to sell as much electricity as possible and stop their customers from switching to solar. SB570 represents a step in the right direction for consumers and the environment, but even greater changes will be needed in the future to change the incentive/penalty structure for power generating and distribution companies to do the right thing for the environment. However, before we can tackle that larger problem, we must first nip this current problem in the bud before it does too much damage. I urge you to please act on SB570 and support legislation to reduce and cap the fixed rate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
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