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July 10, 2020

Mark D. Marini, Secretary
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

Re: Inquiry into Establishing Policies and Practices for Electric and Gas Companies – D.P.U. 20-58

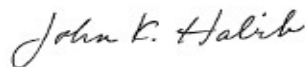
Dear Secretary Marini:

Pursuant to the Order issued by the Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) on June 26, 2020, enclosed for filing is a proposed list of resources developed by NCLC available to customers affected by COVID-19. The Working Group respectfully proposes Attachment 1 with the enclosed information be published on the Department’s website.

Please also note that the Distribution Companies are working on specific customer communications with LEAN with a goal of including such communications in the Phase I customer communications plan approved by the Department. The Working Group will file such communications with the Department when they are final. Please see Attachment 2 for an illustrative draft of the communications.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John K. Habib, Esq.

Enclosures

cc: Rachel Cottle, Esq. – Hearing Officer
Elizabeth Anderson, Esq. – Office of the Attorney General
Robert Hoagland, Esq. – Department of Energy Resources
Charles Harak, Esq. - National Consumer Law Center
Jerrold Oppenheim, Esq. – LEAN
Robert Rio – Associated Industries of Massachusetts

Information About Energy and Utility Help

If you are having trouble paying for your heat, electricity, or natural gas, you may be eligible for these programs:

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP, or Fuel

Assistance) LIHEAP can help you pay your energy and utility bills if you qualify. To learn more about LIHEAP eligibility rules and for a list of fuel assistance offices, please visit <https://www.masscap.org/heatinghelpma/>

Discounts. You may be eligible for a discount on your electricity or natural gas service, contact your utility company for more information.

Payment Plans and AMPs. You may be eligible for a payment plan for your utility bills, or an Arrearage Management Program that will give you both a payment plan and bill credits for timely payments. Contact your utility company for more information.

Having a problem with your gas, electric, or investor-owned water company? If you are a resident or a business owner in Massachusetts and have a question or concern about a bill from your electric, gas, or privately-owned water company, the [Department of Public Utilities Consumer Division](#) may be able to help.

For more consumer information from the Department of Public Utilities, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/help-paying-your-utility-bill>

For more consumer information from the Office of the Attorney General, please visit

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/frequently-asked-questions-about-electric-gas-and-water-utilities-during-covid-19>

and

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/frequently-asked-questions-about-telephone-broadband-and-cable-service-during-covid-19>

Massachusetts energy assistance programs for income-eligible residents

If you are an income-eligible resident of Massachusetts, there are a number of programs that can help you manage your energy costs.

How to qualify

To qualify, your household gross annual income must fall at or below the amounts shown in the chart below. Applicants for energy assistance programs should contact their local Community Action Program (CAP) agency. They will advise you of the necessary documents to verify income eligibility.

2020 Income eligibility amounts

Number of people in household	Annual income
1	up to \$37,360
2	up to \$48,855
3	up to \$60,351
4	up to \$71,846
5	up to \$83,341
6	up to \$94,837
7	up to \$96,992
8	up to \$99,147
9	up to \$101,303
10	up to \$103,458

To find your community action agency, visit [MassSave.com/eligible](https://masssave.com/eligible) or call **866-537-7267**.

Available programs

Fuel Assistance

Fuel Assistance (called LIHEAP—Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) helps pay your primary heating bill whether you are a homeowner or renter. The program makes direct payments to your utility or fuel dealer whether you heat your home with electricity, natural gas, oil, propane, kerosene or wood. If you are a renter whose landlord pays for the heat, you may be eligible to receive a payment from LIHEAP to help with the heating portion of your rent.

For more information about LIHEAP and additional benefit programs, visit benefits.gov/benefit/1576 or mass.gov/home-energy-assistance-programs

Discounted natural gas and electric rates

All state-regulated Massachusetts natural gas and electric utilities offer a residential discount rate. Households receiving Fuel Assistance are enrolled automatically. You are also eligible if you receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); MassHealth; Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) Nutrition Program or another income-qualified program. Eligibility for the discount rate is not limited to these programs, as other means-tested public benefits are also eligible.

Payment plans and/or Forgiveness Programs

Massachusetts natural gas and electric utilities will work with you to spread out payments on overdue portions of your bill. Utilities also offer a Forgiveness Program called the Arrearage Management Program in which past-due balances can be forgiven if you make on-time budget payments. To enroll, please contact your utility directly.

Energy efficiency and weatherization assistance programs

Massachusetts natural gas and electric utilities and Cape Light Compact offer a no-cost program to help reduce your energy bills. It all starts with a no-cost energy assessment of your home to determine possible energy savings opportunities. You will receive energy-efficient LED light bulbs and water conservation devices installed during your assessment. Plus, if your existing appliance is in working order and determined to be inefficient, you may receive a new, no-cost refrigerator, freezer, heating system (or system repair), dehumidifier, front-loading clothes washer, and/or window air conditioner. Other no-cost services may include attic and wall insulation, weather-stripping and sealing of air leaks throughout your home. These services are available whether your home is heated with electricity, natural gas, oil, propane, kerosene or wood. These services are available whether you are a homeowner, tenant or a landlord of a 1- to 4-unit building in which at least half of the units are income-eligible qualified tenants. To learn more or to apply for this service, contact your local community action agency.

Landlords of buildings with five or more units in which at least 50% of the occupants are income-eligible should call **617-348-6425** or apply at leanmultifamily.org

To find your local community action agency, please call **866-537-7267** or visit [MassSave.com/eligible](https://masssave.com/eligible)

Other protections

Protections from utility shut-off

1. Natural gas and electric utilities will not terminate heat-related service from November 15 through March 15, so long as service was not shut off for non-payment prior to November 15.
2. Serious illness—Natural gas and electric utilities will not terminate service if anyone in the household (adult or child) has a serious illness. A medical certification and financial hardship form must be submitted to the utility for documentation.
3. Child under 12 months—Natural gas and electric utilities will not terminate service if anyone in the household is under 12 months old. A birth certificate and financial hardship form must be submitted to the utility for documentation.
4. Elderly—Natural gas and electric utilities will not terminate service if all adult household members are of age 65 or older without obtaining the permission of the Department of Public Utilities.
5. Municipal utility customers—If your electric and or gas service is provided by a municipal utility company, visit muniHELPS.org for more information about energy efficiency offers.

To learn more, please contact your local natural gas and/or electric utility or your local community action agency.

Other sources of heating help

- The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), often administered by your local Fuel Assistance agency, may be able to provide one-time assistance with your utility bill. For more information, please visit efsp.unitedway.org
- The Good Neighbor Energy Fund provides a one-time grant to people who are in temporary financial crisis, but are not income-eligible for Fuel Assistance. Contact your local Salvation Army or call **800-334-3047** (or **800-262-1320** in area code 413) for more information about the Good Neighbor Energy Fund and other help.
- Catholic Charities, the United Way, your city or town, or other local organizations may also be able to help. Dial **211** for information on other Massachusetts social services.

WE ARE MASS SAVE®:



To find your local community action agency, please call **866-537-7267** or visit MassSave.com/eligible

