

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES



Inquiry of the Department of Public Utilities)
into Establishing Policies and Practices for)
Electric and Gas Companies Regarding Customer)
Assistance and Ratemaking Measures in)
Connection to the State of Emergency)
Regarding the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19))
Pandemic.)
_____)

D.P.U. 20-58

JOINT MOTION TO SUSPEND BI-WEEKLY REPORTING

Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company d/b/a Unitil (“Unitil”), Massachusetts Electric Company and Nantucket Electric Company, Boston Gas Company and Colonial Gas Company, each d/b/a National Grid (“National Grid”), and NSTAR Gas Company and NSTAR Electric Company, each d/b/a Eversource Energy (“Eversource”), Bay State Gas Company d/b/a Columbia Gas of Massachusetts (“CMA”)¹, Liberty Utilities (New England Natural Gas Company) Corp. d/b/a Liberty (“Liberty”), and The Berkshire Gas Company (“Berkshire”)(together, the “Distribution Companies”) pursuant to 220 C.M.R. 1.02(5) hereby request the suspension of the required bi-weekly updates of the Working Group’s² Customer Assistance Report.

On May 11, 2020, the Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) issued a Notice of Inquiry into establishing policies and practices for electric and gas companies regarding customer

¹ On October 7, 2020, the Department of Public Utilities approved the asset purchase of CMA. Joint Petition of Eversource Energy, NiSource Inc., Eversource Gas Company of Massachusetts and CMA, D.P.U. 20-59 (2020). CMA is now Eversource Gas of Massachusetts.

² In addition to the Distribution Companies, the Department included the following organizations in the Working Group: the Office of the Attorney General (“AGO” or “Attorney General”, the Department of Energy Resources (“DOER”), the National Consumer Law Center (“NCLC”), the Low-Income Energy Affordability Network (“LEAN”) and the Associated Industries of Massachusetts (“AIM”).

assistance and ratemaking measures in connection to the State of Emergency regarding the novel Coronavirus (“COVID-19”) Pandemic (“NOI”). The NOI directed the Working Group to create a Customer Assistance Report followed by a consensus ratemaking proposal to support customer assistance initiatives and to maintain the financial integrity of the utilities in response to COVID-19. The Working Group submitted the Customer Assistance report on May 29, 2020. On June 26, 2020, the Department issued D.P.U. 20-58-A directing the Working Group to file an updated report by July 30, 2020 and make following reports at two-week intervals thereafter (D.P.U. 20-58-A at 8).

In addition, the Department issued D.P.U. 20-58-B, directing the Working Group to report to the Department in its next Update Report, on the following issues as results are available:

- eligibility criteria for a proposed 18-month payment plan for small C&I customers (First Report at 9, n.6);
- the specific timeframe according to which notices that lead up to termination of service, such as the second and final notices described in 220 CMR 25.02(b) and (c), may be sent to customers (First Report at 10); and
- eligibility criteria for large C&I customers (NOI at 10, n.7).

D.P.U. 20-58-B at 17-18.

Updates to the Report were filed on August 4, August 21, September 17, October 15, and November 6, 2020. The Working Group has worked continuously to address the many customer assistance topics and has responded to each of the Department’s directives for clarification in D.P.U. 20-58-B. All of the open items have been addressed in each of the updates to the report, and there are no outstanding issues. Accordingly, the Distribution Companies respectfully request the bi-weekly reporting directive be suspended, with any further updates to be provided on as as-

needed basis to respond to a specific request of the Department or other stakeholder. The Distribution Companies will continue to provide weekly arrearage data to the Department and file monthly arrearage tracking spreadsheets in this proceeding.

The Working Group process has been insightful and productive resulting in *inter alia* an approved communication plan, an approved Small Commercial Arrearage Forgiveness Plan, and approved and proposed extended payment arrangements for residential and commercial and industrial customers, respectively. While the Working Group process has been productive, the open items requiring collaboration have been addressed. As such, the Distribution Companies request bi-weekly reporting be suspended and replaced with an *ad hoc* data inquiry or update process.

For these reasons, the Distribution Companies respectfully request the Department suspend the bi-weekly directive to update the Customer Assistance Report. The Distribution Companies are authorized to state the Working Group does not object to the proposed suspension of the bi-weekly updates to the Customer Assistance Report.

The Distribution Companies are eager to continue to deliver the approved programs and plans and to meet and respond to customers' needs during these challenging times. The Distribution Companies look forward to collaborating with the Working Group in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES

By their attorneys,

**FITCHBURG GAS AND ELECTRIC
LIGHT COMPANY d/b/a UNITIL**



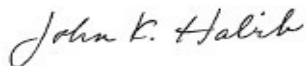
Gary Epler, Esq.
Unitil Service Corp
6 Liberty Lane West
Hampton, NH 03842
(603) 773-6440

**LIBERTY UTILITIES (NEW
ENGLAND NATURAL GAS
COMPANY) CORP. D/B/A LIBERTY**



Ronald J. Ritchie, Esq.
Liberty Utilities
36 Fifth Street
Fall River, MA 02721

EVERSOURCE ENERGY



John K. Habib, Esq.
Ashley S. Wagner, Esq.
Keegan Werlin LLP
99 High Street, Ste. 2900
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 951-1400

THE BERKSHIRE GAS COMPANY



Daniel P. Venora, Esq.
Keegan Werlin LLP
99 High Street, Ste. 2900
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 951-1400

NATIONAL GRID



Meabh Purcell, Esq.
National Grid
40 Sylvan Road
Waltham, MA 02451

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