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Greetings,

I am writing to voice my opposition to expansion of the low-income rate, including tiers of rates based on income. There are several problems with this idea. First and foremost, it will contribute to the hollowing out of the middle class, who must subsidize not only the ever-expanding low income discount, but also those with solar panels through the SMART Program and now, through basic netmetering which translates into a high-income discount.

Those in the middle who do not qualify for the low-income discount, however much its expanded, nor can afford solar panels, will be part of an ever-shrinking subsidizer class. Of course the Investor-owned utilities have no problem expanding the low-income discount, they don't pay for it. The ratepayers do. It can be used to cover inefficiencies and outright waste by the companies. Its easier to sell a rate increase request when its paired with a generous discount.

Another problem with expanding the discount or having tiers or classes of rates is data privacy. Many more ratepayers will have to share their income information with third parties. Data breaches are inevitable.

The Commission should be exploring other ways to cut costs and make rates more affordable. They could explore options such as restricting low-income customers from getting into contracts with supplier companies, unless its part of a municipal aggregation. This is done in Connecticut.

Expanding the low income discount will come at the expense of the middle class, not benefit it. Thank you.

Regards,

Marc Pacheco
Topsfield, MA