

State of Illinois



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

March 18, 2020

VIA E-Mail

To: Regulatory Representatives of Municipal Public Utilities and Cooperatives

Re: Termination of Service during Public Health Emergency

I write to urge your utility or cooperative to take immediate steps to cease disconnections for non-payment and to suspend the imposition of late payment fees or penalties, until May 1, 2020 or until the Governor announces the end of the state of public health emergency. In addition, I recommend that your utility or cooperative temporarily implement more flexible credit and collections procedures to ensure that customers remain connected to essential services when the emergency status ends.

As you are no doubt aware, on March 9, 2020, Governor J.B. Pritzker issued a Declaration, finding that a public health emergency exists in the State of Illinois within the meaning of the IEMA Act due to COVID-19 epidemic, and declaring all 102 counties within the State to be disaster areas. Subsequently, the Governor and the Attorney General of the State of Illinois requested that the Commission act within its jurisdiction to ensure that, during the declared public health emergency, all people have continued access to essential utility service, regardless of ability to pay.

On March 18, 2020, the Commission issued an Interim Emergency Order, to parties under its jurisdiction, to "cease disconnections for non-payment, to cease giving notice of disconnection of utility service and to suspend the imposition of late payment fees or penalties" until May 1, 2020 or until the Governor announces the end of the state of public health emergency (Interim Emergency Order, 6). After the emergency ends, the Commission directs utilities to enact more flexible credit and collections procedures to ensure that customers remain connected to essential services.

I recognize that the Commission may have no statutory authority to mandate your utility or cooperative's compliance with the Interim Emergency Order. However, I request that your utility or cooperative take immediate steps to implement similar procedures regarding disconnections and late payments to help mitigate the financial impact of this public health emergency. The Commission believes that the ability to remain safely and comfortably in one's home during this emergency should not depend on financial condition, and that the number of residents unable to afford payments for essential utility services will grow due to increased medical expenses and possible loss of income during the state of emergency.

Should you have questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Z', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Zolnierek
Acting Executive Director
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