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United Illuminating Rate Increase Testimony
Docket Number 16-06-04

September 15, 2016
Public Utilities Regulation Authority

My name is James Albis, State Representative from the Town of East Haven, and I want to thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on Docket Number 16-06-04. I am writing to voice my concern regarding the proposed rate increase request from United Illuminating (UI) to increase its distribution rates beginning in 2017. All Connecticut residents deserve electricity at a fair and reasonable price and I would therefore urge you to reconsider this rate increase.

Already, I have heard from many of my East Haven constituents that they are worried about the impacts of this rate increase. I too, share the concern about such a high rate increase when Connecticut residents and businesses are already pay higher electricity rates than the vast majority of the country. I am particularly concerned about the impact on those with a fixed income.

Residents in East Haven and elsewhere have struggled mightily through these difficult fiscal times and find themselves again and again having to cut corners. Those especially vulnerable, such as senior citizens, low-income families, and small businesses, will no doubt take the hardest hit. When rates are raised, seniors for example, may try to save money by turning off their heater or air conditioning. This summer saw record heat that particularly endangers the elderly. Seniors cannot risk turning off their air conditioning without risking impairing their own health. If rates are raised to the degree UI is requesting, seniors may be forced to

make decisions that put them in harm's way.

It's also worth noting that UI's bills are the highest in Connecticut. At the rate increase level UI is proposing, the average household in 2019 would pay approximately \$360 more per year than they do now. Our residents and businesses are already at a disadvantage regionally and nationally, and these proposed increases will further add to that disadvantage.

As many of my colleagues have said and written, all Connecticut residents and businesses should have access to electric service that is affordable and reliable. I understand that there are surely vital improvements that need to be made, such as replacing old equipment to increase system resilience, and I understand the need to find funding mechanisms for such work. However, I worry that the proposed rate increases go well above and beyond these types of investments. I urge you to consider only investments that provide a *direct benefit* to ratepayers. Corporate charges and other overhead costs do not provide these direct benefits and should not be a part of a proposed rate increase.

Additionally, it would benefit ratepayers to see a proposed spending plan associated with these rate increases, and how that compares to recent rate increases and associated spending. Such a spending plan would allow a transparent look at how UI would spend ratepayer dollars and an honest evaluation of the *direct benefits* to ratepayers.

I would like to reiterate that Connecticut residents and businesses look to United Illuminating to go about their lives. I urge you to reconsider the extreme rate increases proposed by UI.

Thank you again for allowing me to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James M. Albis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James M. Albis