


**From:** [Wufoo](#)  
**To:** [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Submitted Public Comment Form  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 15, 2021 9:22:47 AM

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Provide the docket's number. *	E,G-999/CI-20-375
Leave a comment on the docket. *	See letter attached.
Attach a File	 <a href="#">comment_on_puc_docket_eg999ci20375.pdf</a> 180.12 KB · PDF

September 15, 2021  
VIA ELECTRONIC FILING  
Will Seuffert  
Executive Secretary  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
121 7th Place E, Suite 350  
St. Paul MN 55101  
Re: In the Matter of the Inquiry into  
Actions by Electric and Natural Gas Utilities in Light of the COVID-19  
Pandemic Emergency  
Docket No. E,G-999/CI-20-375

Dear Mr. Seuffert,

I am the policy and advocacy director at Pillsbury United Communities, a 140-year-old, community-serving nonprofit in Minneapolis that has been assisting in the state's efforts to distribute RentHelpMN dollars to those who need them most.

Our organization requests that the Public Utilities Commission modify Order Point 5 from May 26, 2021 to include the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program as a listed program alongside LIHEAP/EAP prohibiting disconnections of customers with past due balances who have a pending application or have been deemed eligible for assistance for the duration of the transition period (April 30, 2022).

It is important that the PUC modify Order Point 5. in order to protect the economic stability, health, and safety of renters. Too many individuals who seek assistance paying their past due rent through RentHelpMN are also unable to pay their utilities bills. For most of these applicants, quite a few months pass between filing their application and their initial application review. Because of this long waiting period, many applicants have one or more of their utilities disconnected by the time their application review has begun. Applicants who have their utilities disconnected frequently resort to borrowing money from friends, family, or financial lenders who charge exorbitantly high interest rates, leading to an exacerbation of the renter's financial issues. Even more troublesome, the health and safety of the renters is also jeopardized because without access to electricity or gas, they are unable to do basic functions like cook or protect themselves from harsh weather conditions. With this year's unprecedentedly hot summer, tenants without access to air conditioning were at high risk of heat stroke and other health complications. If renters are not protected from having their utilities disconnected this upcoming winter, their health will be at stake as temperatures decrease.

Moreover, lack of access to electricity leads to a stagnation or a decrease in a renter's job or education prospects as an inability to use electronics keeps them from engaging in an increasingly online world. As local schools rely more on virtual education, the inability to use electronics heavily impacts the academic success of renters and their children. Similarly, acquiring or maintaining a job becomes more difficult without the ability of renters to do simple tasks like reply to emails or join virtual meetings.



For these reasons highlighted above, we urge the PUC to modify Order Point 5 to protect renters seeking rental assistance through RentHelpMN from having their utilities disconnected. Thank you for your consideration,

**Kenzie O'Keefe**  
**Director of Policy & Advocacy**  
**Pillsbury United Communities**  
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