

From: [Cassie Davison Bair](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Docket No. E,G-999/CI-20-375
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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,

We at New Hope Church are writing to request that the Public Utilities Commission modify Order Point 5 from May26, 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).

We have seen the effects of the pandemic on our community; especially with families who participate at our food shelf. 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,

Cassie Davison Bair

Cassie Davison Bair

Community Outreach Director

New Hope Church

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A CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY FOR ALL PEOPLES,
MOVING TOWARD JESUS & TAKING OTHERS WITH US