



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **PSC Response to COVID-19 Is Long Overdue**

**March 5, 2021**

On Thursday March 4th, ten months after OPC filed its petition requesting the DC Public Service Commission investigate ways to help consumers impacted by COVID-19, the PSC issued an order providing a few measures to assist utility consumers struggling to pay utility bills during the pandemic.

People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye stated that "While the Public Service Commission has finally taken some action to protect consumers, I am disappointed that none of the measures provide immediate relief to consumers. Had the Commission taken action ten months ago, it would have been more effective in stemming the tide of over \$43,000,000 in arrearages that have built up during the pandemic.

The relief measures, which include some proposed by OPC, require the utilities to take the following three steps:

- 1) provide consumers with 45 days notice prior to disconnection of service. The notice can be sent once the Mayor lifts the public health emergency.
- 2) requires Washington Gas Light to file a proposed arrearage management plan by April 19, 2021. An arrearage management plan is a debt relief program that allows consumers to make a set number of payments to the utility and have the balance of their arrearages written off.
- 3) requires utility companies to offer 12-month payment plans to customers in arrears.

In addition to requiring the utilities to provide relief measures, the PSC also increased the eligibility requirements for the two low-income energy programs, Residential Essential Service for natural gas service

and Residential Aid Discount for electric service, allowing more consumers to receive discounted utility service.

“Considering the long-term impact of the pandemic on utility consumers I am also concerned that the Commission has not taken this opportunity to immediately convene a stakeholder forum to develop other relief measures. Complex public policy issues are developed through the process of stakeholders asking the right questions and using their expertise and resources to develop answers. Now, more than ever, a collaborative stakeholder process is needed. Sadly, the Commission has chosen to wait until after the public health emergency ends to begin this critical process. I remain committed to developing solutions and will continue to work with stakeholders to craft measures that will provide relief to consumers now,” stated People’s Counsel Frye.

**Media Contact:**

Doxie McCoy  
Public Information Officer  
(202) 261-1180  
dmccoy@opc-dc.gov

---

DC Office of the People's Counsel | [Website](#)

