

To: Public Service Commission

From: Linda McAnany
President/CPO
United Way of Central Missouri

Subject: Proposed Emergency Cold Weather Rule
Case No. Gx-2006-0181

Utility bills continue to be a major concern for low-income individuals. In the five years that I have been in this position, I have seen the need for energy assistance continue to increase even though there are a number of providers working together to reduce the problem. There is no easy answer.

That said, I applaud the efforts of the PSC to help those individuals whose energy bills, specifically gas, will grow to near all-time high levels. However, I am not sure that the answer is to cap their payments at \$60 a month and extend the period that they have to pay-off their bills. This may just delay the inevitable.

What those providing energy assistance are telling us is that the over-due bills are getting larger. A few years ago, the average over-due bill was maybe \$200-\$400. It is not unusual for these over-due bills to be \$1500-\$2000. Since very few agencies can afford to pay bills of that size, many try to pledge a portion just to keep the service from being disconnected.

I wish I had an answer. I don't. But I am not convinced that this is going to solve the problem and may create additional burdens on our low-income population.