



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR SERVICE AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

December 7, 2020

Chairman Ryan Silvey and Commissioners
Missouri Public Service Commission
200 Madison Street, PO Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360

Dear Chairman and Commissioners,

The Center for Service and Community Engagement at Saint Louis University continues to work to be a voice regarding public policy that can reduce poverty and alleviate injustices. We are writing you today because we understand that food and shelter are fundamental human rights.

Therefore, we would like to share our support for the emergency order that is being filed this afternoon by the Consumers Council of Missouri. We are convinced that a winter moratorium on utility disconnections is vital if we are to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in our state. Recent research, including this study from Duke University, show that “eviction, electricity, and water utility moratoria have played an important role in containing the COVID-19 pandemic and.....should be carefully considered.” Missouri already has a severe shortage of affordable housing according to the annual “The Gap” report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and the challenges of utility costs are often the precipitating factor for homelessness to occur or families to “double up” into overcrowded spaces. Neither homelessness nor overcrowding promote sheltering in place, hand hygiene, and other practices that public health officials recommend during this time of near-capacity hospital occupancy and very high rates of coronavirus transmission. We believe the Public Service Commission must take action to protect public health and is authorized to do so under RSMo § 386.310

We stand ready to work with public officials to promote the best possible outcomes as we navigate through the present public health challenge together.

Sincerely,

Bryan Sokol, PhD
Director
Bryan.Sokol@slu.edu

Jessica Trout, MSW
Advocacy Coordinator
Jessica.Trout@slu.edu