



Helping People, Changing Lives

December 10, 2020

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

Chairman and Commissioners:

For 50 years, Missouri Community Action Network and its member agencies have worked to alleviate the effects of poverty and help people achieve a life of financial stability. Our agencies and their staff have dedicated themselves to assisting those with low incomes. Our work has given us a unique perspective on poverty and its effects on citizens' health.

We write to you to express our strong support for the request for an emergency order filed by the Consumers Council of Missouri to institute a moratorium on utility disconnections until March 31, 2021. We believe this is a critical part of our state's response to the pandemic and is key in ensuring the safety of the people we serve.

In recent weeks, COVID-19 cases have surged around the nation and the state. More than a quarter of a million Americans have lost their lives. Meanwhile, countless Missourians have been thrust into unemployment or under-employment through no fault of their own. Many hardworking citizens now find themselves in poverty. And while our network of Community Action Agencies works diligently to provide the services people need to weather this unprecedented situation, resources are limited or in several instances, with pandemic-related income losses, existing resources are not open to many households.

For example, a vast number of households who are struggling for the first time due to COVID-19 do not fall under the 135% poverty threshold necessary to receive the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Every day, we see more and more families suffering, and with possible disconnections looming, things are likely to get worse for many of them.

To combat the virus, public health officials have consistently urged citizens to shelter at home. Utility shut offs could make this impossible for those who have been economically impacted by this pandemic. Recent research has shown that utility and housing moratoriums have played a critical role in containing COVID-19, particularly in underprivileged communities.



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Through a moratorium, the Public Service Commission could help limit the scope of the virus and its impact on Missourians. You can save lives. You can make sure that citizens are not forced onto the streets during one of the most trying times in the history of our nation. We strongly urge you to give full consideration to the Consumers Council of Missouri's request.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dawn Fogarty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Dawn Fogarty

Executive Director, Missouri Community Action Network