

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee. I am facing electricity and gas shutoff this week - February 26 & February 27, 2026, and need help.

My name is Baratang S., and I live in Providence. I lost my job of eight (8) years, as a Manager/Coordinator, with a Non - Profit organization, in June 2025. This is my first time testifying before a legislative committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I am here today to speak in support of the Governor's utility bill relief proposal contained in Article 11, Sections 3 through 11 of the budget.

As a voting citizen and Rhode Island resident for over 30 years, I am writing to express my support for the governor's utilities bill relief proposal. I am a hardworking individual with a degree. Unfortunately, despite my efforts, I have found myself unemployed & have exhausted my Unemployment Insurance benefits and now have zero income.

I have been struggling to pay my energy bills, and RI Energy's payment plans are unrealistic for someone in my situation, even during my years of employment. The 10% down payment requirement is unmanageable, and explaining my income status hasn't led to helpful solutions. With RI Energy threatening to shut off my electricity on February 26, 2026, and my Gas/Heat on February 27, 2026, if I don't pay what is owed. I'm facing a dire situation.

This proposal would provide critical relief and help people like me, who are doing everything possible to make ends meet. I urge you to support this bill and help Rhode Islanders stay connected to essential services.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important proposal. I respectfully urge you to support the Governor's utility bill relief plan.