

Good afternoon. My name is **Jenny Mercado**. I live in Providence, in the Olneyville neighborhood. I work as a **Certified Nursing Assistant in the Emergency Room at Hasbro Children's Hospital, and this is my first time testifying.**

I am here today to express my support for the Governor's utility bill relief proposal, which is included in **Article 11, Sections 3 through 11 of the budget.**

Like many working families, I am very concerned about the total cost of my utility bills, especially the delivery charges, which often feel higher than the actual energy I use. Even when we try to conserve electricity and heat, our bills continue to rise, making it harder to keep up with other basic needs like food, rent, and childcare.

What many people don't realize is that about one-quarter of our total utility bill comes from state programs and taxes. These costs are embedded into delivery charges and parts of the supply portion of the bill, making them feel hidden and unavoidable.

Lowering these delivery charges matters deeply to me and my family. As a healthcare worker and a mother, every dollar counts. High utility bills create real stress and force families to make difficult choices—especially during the winter months. Utility relief would provide much-needed breathing room for working families like mine who are already stretched thin.

Under current law, these charges are set to increase, which will only make the situation worse. That is why I strongly support the Governor's plan to lower these charges instead. This proposal is a meaningful step toward affordability, fairness, and stability for Rhode Island families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for considering the voices of everyday residents like me.

Best regards

Jenny Mercado