

Public Testimony:

Public Utility Commission of Texas

By: The Rev. Miles Brandon

Vicar, St. Julian of Norwich Episcopal Church, Round Rock, TX

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Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer public testimony. I am the Rev. Miles Brandon, Pastor of St. Julian of Norwich Episcopal Church in Round Rock, TX and a Clergy Leader in Central Texas Interfaith, one of 10 coalitions in the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation Network. I come before you mindful of Jesus' call to love our neighbors as ourselves and that, when care for the least of these who are members of God's own family, we care for Jesus himself.

As the largest network of faith and community-based organizations in Texas, with 10 broad-based coalitions representing hundreds of thousands of families statewide, the Texas IAF is extremely concerned about the physical and financial impact of COVID-19 on working families. With aggressive containment efforts of COVID-19 underway, including "Shelter in Place" requirements across the State, Central Texas Interfaith along with all of our sister Texas IAF Organizations are calling the Texas Public Utility Commission to take the following steps to keep Texas citizens safe during this pandemic:

- 1. Cease all utility cutoffs/shutdowns (water, phone, and electricity) until 30 days after the State ends its Emergency Declaration
- 2. Waive any late fees that have or will accrue from the start of the Emergency Declaration until 30 days after it ends
- 3. Extend payment due dates with no down payment required during this same period.
- 4. Reduce down payments and defer balances over five equal installments
- 5. Enact additional bill-payment assistance by PUC to citizens in need through the utility aid program
- 6. Require local utility companies to have assistance plans in place if a customer is unable to pay their bill

COVID-19 is causing uncertainty and many hardships, and during this time, Central Texas Interfaith and our partner organizations in Texas IAF don't want Texas citizens to have their physical or financial health put in danger unnecessarily. To fight the spread of COVID-19 access to water, communications, and electricity are basic necessities. Thank you for your time, your attention to our requests, and your important service and leadership for the people of Texas.