



The Metropolitan Organization (TMO)

4141 Southwest Freeway; Ste 650

Houston, Texas 77027

Public Utility Commission of Texas

PO Box 13326

Austin, TX 78711-3326

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Bryan Lopez and I am a member of Assumption Catholic Church in Northeast Houston. I am writing today on behalf of The Metropolitan Organization (TMO), a coalition of 35 congregations located in the Metro Houston area. TMO is part of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation, the largest network of faith and community-based organizations in Texas, with 10 broad-based coalitions representing hundreds of thousands of families statewide. TMO and the Texas IAF are extremely concerned about the physical and financial impact of COVID-19 on working families. We have heard from many families and business owners who are part of our member congregations that due to the economic slowdown they are struggling to pay their regular bills including their rent and utility bills.

Many of our member organizations are religious congregations and they have been trying their best to help support their surrounding communities, with food, mental health assistance, and providing information for any other assistance that the people we serve may need. This in turn has brought about this petition where we strongly urge you to please consider these families that have been financially impacted by this global epidemic. Some people may not be able to pay these bills in the next few months and we ask you to direct the utilities that you regulate not to cut off utilities due to late/no payments.

I would like to clarify that these families have every intention of paying back these bills but currently are struggling to survive their loss of income due to being furloughed from their work. We would like to find a way where these victims of circumstance can move forward with life and not have to live in unsafe conditions, especially with the hot weather coming up and the need for food refrigeration. With aggressive containment efforts of COVID-19 underway, including "Shelter in Place" requirements across the State, TMO and the 10 Texas IAF Organizations are calling the Texas Public Utility Commission to take the following steps to keep Texas citizens safe during this pandemic:

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

COVID-19 has been especially hard to our communities here in Houston as many are still recovering from Hurricane Harvey and Irma. During this time of great need, TMO/IAF of Texas doesn't want Texas citizens to be put in danger unnecessarily and we want everyone to have a fighting chance to get through this. We ask you to join us in this effort to fight the spread of COVID-19 by allowing people to access gas, water, communications, and electricity which are essential as they are asked to shelter at home and work safe.

Sincerely –

Bryan Lopez

for The Metropolitan Organization (TMO)