



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham to Utilities: Give Struggling Customers a Break

PETE HARCKHAM March 5, 2025

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Senator Harckham in Albany

### Waive late fees and ease payment plan access

*Peekskill, NY* - New York State Senator Pete Harckham asked utility companies today to waive their late fees and ease payment plan access for customers in arrears and already facing financial challenges as a result of skyrocketing prices for food, fuel, housing and more.

“Hundreds of constituents have contacted my office to say that they are having to make difficult choices about spending on essentials because of escalating utility bills,” said Harckham in a letter to utilities. “They should not have to choose between keeping the lights on and buying medicine. That is why I am asking the utility companies to ease the burden of those facing these challenges.”

“PULP strongly supports this urgent call to suspend late fees and implement more accessible payment plans for struggling utility customers,” said Laurie Wheelock, Executive Director and Counsel of the Public Utility Law Project (“PULP”). “The combination of rising utility costs, mounting arrears, and economic uncertainty has broken the budgets of nearly 1.3 million households. Things have reached a crisis point, and the state must act now to ensure families are not left in the dark simply because they are unable to catch up. We commend Senator Harckham for standing up for consumers and urging immediate action to protect vulnerable New Yorkers.”

Currently, Con Edison, NYSEG and O&R charge their customers who are in arrears up to 1.5 % a month in late payment fees. These compounding late fees can easily add hundreds of dollars a year. For a family on a tight budget, this is an unnecessary hardship. With so many households struggling financially, waiving these fees would offer some immediate relief for those customers behind on their payments.

The utility companies can voluntarily waive the fees immediately, as NYSEG did in 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many utility customers fell behind on their payments.

Harckham also urged Con Edison, NYSEG and O&R to restructure their payment plans to make them more accessible and flexible for those who are facing financial difficulties.

Currently, customers in arrears have to come up with a 15% down payment in order to qualify for a payment agreement plan, which is unaffordable to many.

“I believe you have an opportunity to show compassion and support for our community,” Harckham told the utilities in his letter.