



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE GARY TURCO
27TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 1806
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-8267
FAX: (860) 240-0206
E-MAIL: Gary.Turco@cga.ct.gov

VICE CHAIR
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMBER
CHILDREN COMMITTEE
INSURANCE & REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE

Dear Representative Arconti, Senator Needleman, and distinguished members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

Thank you for holding this important informational legislative hearing regarding the Tropical Storm Isaias response and electric utility rate increases. Both of these issues have had a devastating impact on the constituents I represent in the Town of Newington and actions must be taken to prevent further distress in the future.

While I understand that public utility companies cannot predict the weather with certainty, I do believe Eversource, which supplies electricity to Newington, was grossly unprepared and failed in their response to the storm in several key areas such as a communication plan to government officials and to the public. Eversource customers have invested millions to harden the electric grid as well as Eversource's communications systems, but these failed during the storm and customers could not report outages, downed wires, and other hazards.

Thousands of Newington residents were without power for nearly a week and as a result, lost food, expensive prescription drugs, and suffered through the summer heat, creating additional stress on top of battling a pandemic. The outages caused cell phone, cable, and internet service to be down leaving many unable to communicate with families and seek assistance. Also, many of our small businesses who are trying to rebuild suffered from the extended outage.

As I went door to door throughout neighborhoods without power in Newington offering assistance to people, I heard a lot of the same thing- people wanted information. Many understood that there were many broken powerlines and they would be without power, but they wanted to at least have a timeline so they could properly prepare. With better communication, many said they could have saved their food and medications. When the communication came, it was too late, and it cost them financially at a time when they are already stretched thin from the pandemic and rate hikes.

Regarding the increased rates customers have recently seen on their Eversource bills, I urge this committee to do everything it can to roll back these increases and credit residents for the increase they already have received.

I ask this committee to consider creating legislation to be voted on during an upcoming special legislative session that addresses the following issues:

- Compensation for consumers and requiring back-up generation for critical needs customers who lose power for extended periods of time
- Bolster the civil penalty authority of PURA
- Change the legal liability of utility companies to hold them accountable
- Require minimum in-state payroll staffing of line workers to restore power after major outages
- Mandate burying power lines where possible
- Freeze on rate increases
- More electric options for consumers and a more decentralized power grid
- Local options for renewable energy
- Public hearings on how rates are set

Tropical Storm Isaias was not the first time our utility companies have failed to provide an adequate and responsible response to our communities. For nearly a decade, our state has been trapped in an endless cycle of broken promises vowing to do better, only to find ourselves in the dark for days after a disastrous storm. We cannot let this happen again. Our constituents deserve better.

Thank you again for your attention and time to this extremely important matter. I stand ready and willing to work with the committee to pass landmark legislation that will put in place the reforms we need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Turco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Turco
State Representative
Proudly serving the 27th District of Newington