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February 16, 2025

Jamie Van Nostrand, Chair
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Chair Van Nostrand,

I am deeply troubled by the recent spike in natural gas utility rates and the financial strain this unexpected rate hike is having on Massachusetts residents. The impact of this increased financial burden comes at an already difficult time for many Massachusetts families and businesses, as the costs of everyday goods, gasoline, and groceries continue to rise and the threat of tariffs looms. People did not plan for these extraordinary utility rate increases, and they can only do so much to stretch a budget. **The DPU must act immediately to provide rate relief to customers in this heating season.**

I recognize that energy costs in Massachusetts are closely tied to global oil and gas markets and driven in part by increasing demand and higher usage due to the cold weather. While the DPU cannot control all the drivers, you and the gas utilities have an obligation to do all you can to help consumers reduce bills and avoid future large, unanticipated price spikes like this.

The DPU must **proactively identify ways to reduce future price volatility for natural gas customers and make rate changes more transparent and predictable.** In 2023, the DPU took steps to stabilize electricity rates after a run-up in electricity supply prices occurred the prior year. The DPU must bring that same focus and intentionality to insulating customers from these sudden gas bill spikes.

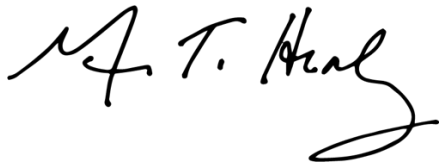
The DPU also must **prioritize and accelerate its on-going work to address energy affordability.** This should include changing rates to give customers the ability to reduce costs, expanding discount programs to middle income customers, and reducing the energy burden on the most financially disadvantaged customers.

At the same time, **the gas utilities must do a better job getting customers into existing programs that help customers reduce bills and manage their costs.** By participating in Mass Save, customers can save thousands of dollars in energy costs by making their homes less drafty and more energy efficient. People who need it the most can get discounted rates and direct help paying their bills. Customers can reduce bill volatility by choosing to spread costs throughout the year. And, customers that get behind on their bills can get help catching up. Yet, far too often consumers are unaware of these programs, or the programs are too hard to access. I am directing the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to ensure that the state's electric and gas utilities are doing all they can to get consumers into money saving programs, including educating and engaging consumers where they live, work and go about their daily lives. The utilities must make it easier for energy consumers to get the help they need in a way that works for them and gets results.

It is also imperative that energy consumers know their rights, including that they cannot have their utility service shut off during the winter months. Staying warm is critical for everyone's health and safety.

Winter isn't over. The DPU and the gas utilities must act now to provide relief from these high rates and make the changes necessary to ensure that this does not happen again next winter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M. T. Healey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Maura T. Healey