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MAINE'S PUBLIC ADVOCATE EXPRESSES DISAPPOINTMENT AT PUC DENIAL OF EMERGENCY PETITION ASKING FOR HELP FOR LOW-INCOME RATEPAYERS

*Public Advocate asked for extra \$75 per family in Low-Income Assistance Program to help
with high electric bills*

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December 20, 2022 | HALLOWELL, ME – Reacting to the sudden and unexpected denial of an emergency petition for relief from high electricity bills, William Harwood, the state's Public Advocate, today expressed his disappointment and his puzzlement at the decision by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

"I'm disappointed, but actually, I'm also a little stunned," said Harwood. "The PUC is interpreting the law to indicate it doesn't have the authority to do this, but it's no different from the emergency payments that were approved last year. The need is immediate, the legal issue is the same as last year, yet this time the PUC kicked the issue to the curb."

To address the immediate needs of low-income ratepayers, the Office of Public Advocate (OPA) earlier this month, filed an emergency request to the PUC for a temporary increase of low-income benefits this winter. Specifically, OPA is requesting a \$75 bill credit in January for all low-income customers currently enrolled in the [Low Income Assistance Program](#) (LIAP). This will offset the first 3 months of the approximately \$25/month increase in the Standard Offer price.

The filing was in response to the recently announced increases in price of the Standard Offer service, the supply side of electricity bills, of approximately 49 percent for Central Maine Power and 38 percent for Versant. These increases will take effect on January 1, 2023.

"The PUC may have moved on from this issue, but my office has not," said Harwood. "We will look for other ways to get these low-income families some relief from these burdensome price increases."