

RHODE ISLAND



Rhode Island Poor People's Campaign
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April 2, 2024

Members of the House Corporations Committee

In support of H-7286, Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – PUC

Honorable members of the House Committee on Corporations:

This letter is on behalf of the Rhode Island Poor People's Campaign: a National Call for Moral Revival. We are a network of individuals, congregations and community organizations committed to lifting up and deepening the leadership of those most affected by the interlocking injustices of systemic racism, poverty and inequality, the war economy, ecological devastation, and the false narrative of religious nationalism. We seek to build unity across lines of division.

It is our purpose in writing to support this legislation. Poverty is the fourth-leading cause of death in the U.S., according to recent research.¹ "Poverty silently killed ten times as many people as all the homicides in 2019," said David Brady, a professor at the University of California, Riverside and the study's lead author. "And yet, homicide, firearms and suicide get vastly more attention."

Access to utilities is a matter of life and death. This is always true, but even more so today, given the brutal price increases we have witnessed over the last couple of years. Daily necessities of life—such as food, housing and energy—have become unaffordable for an ever-increasing number of people.

Loss of utilities is the last stop before homelessness. Even the stress coming with the threat of homelessness is a killer, as recent research shows. Indeed, a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that mortality surged for renters facing eviction during the pandemic. The pandemic may be over but its fall-out is still taking its toll and increasingly so as bills become due.²

As always, people who are poor or low-income are most affected. Among them disproportionately represented are indigenous people and people of color.

Yours sincerely,

The Rhode Island Poor Peoples' Campaign

¹<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2023.0276>

²<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2815200>