



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF CONSUMER COUNSEL
NEWS RELEASE**

Interim Consumer Counsel Claire E. Coleman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**INTERIM CONSUMER COUNSEL CLAIRE E. COLEMAN CALLS FOR
INVESTIGATION OF EVERSOURCE AND UNITED ILLUMINATING FOR WAGE
GARNISHMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

OCC is in Receipt of Information that Connecticut's Major Utilities Sued Consumers and Sought Wage Garnishment for Unpaid Bills During the Covid-19 Shut-Off Moratorium in Direct Contradiction of Connecticut's Efforts to Assist Vulnerable Households in a Time of Economic Hardship and Uncertainty

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. (March 11, 2022) – Interim Consumer Counsel Claire E. Coleman announced today that she has filed a [Petition](#) with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) requesting an investigation of Connecticut's two largest public utility companies, Eversource Energy (Eversource, Yankee Gas Services, Aquarion Water Company of Connecticut) and Avangrid, Inc. (The United Illuminating Company, Connecticut Natural Gas, Southern Connecticut Gas). The OCC obtained information from the utilities through interrogatories that demonstrates that at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the utility companies sued consumers for nonpayment and sought and received wage garnishment in court. Such actions are contradictory to the intent of PURA's multiple orders seeking to assist vulnerable and low-income consumers during the unprecedented financial challenges that Covid-19 inflicted upon the people of Connecticut.

"I am deeply disturbed," said Interim Consumer Counsel Coleman. "OCC, PURA, the Attorney General, and many other stakeholders have worked diligently over the course of the pandemic to ensure that consumers facing financial hardship receive the assistance they need to keep the lights on and the heat running. To learn that our utilities, and to the greatest extent United Illuminating, were pursuing judgments against consumers in court during the Covid-19 State of Emergency rather than directing them to the many assistance and relief programs available during this time is shocking. I welcome a full investigation into this matter."

In response to a petition from the Office of Attorney General, PURA opened [Docket No. 20-03-15](#) at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic. That proceeding established an initial shut-off moratorium for essential utility services and has since established numerous relief programs and

options for consumers who are facing financial hardship during the ongoing economic distress that Covid-19 has inflicted upon the people of Connecticut.

Interim Consumer Counsel Coleman thanked Staff Attorneys Thomas Wiehl, Julie Datres, and Andrew W. Minikowski and Utilities Examiner Tyra A. Peluso for their assistance in this matter.

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The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is the State of Connecticut's advocate for consumers on issues relating to electricity, natural gas, water, and telecommunications. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/occ.