

The Energy and Technology Committee

Public Hearing, March 5, 2013

Office of Consumer Counsel

Elin Swanson Katz, Consumer Counsel

Testimony of Elin Swanson Katz

**Proposed S.B. 109,
*An Act Concerning Notification to Municipalities of Termination of a
Customer's Utility Service.***

The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) has carefully reviewed Proposed Senate Bill (S.B) No. 109, *An Act Concerning Notification to Municipalities of Termination of a Customer's Utility Service*. OCC generally supports this bill as a supplemental means to protect the safety of Connecticut electric, gas, and water company customers. Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) section 16-262c limits when utilities may terminate residential electric and gas service. In general, utilities may not terminate residential electric, gas, or water service on any Friday, Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or day before any legal holiday. From November 1 through May 1, electric and gas companies generally may not terminate, deny, or refuse to reinstate residential electric or gas service to customers who lack the financial resources to pay their bills. There are also specific termination restrictions in place for hardship customers for whom termination of, denial of, or failure to reinstate electric or gas service would create a life-threatening situation to a member of the household.

In addition to the termination restrictions contained in C.G.S. section 16-262c, notifying municipal leaders of a customer's utility termination would provide town residents with an additional layer of protection. Moreover, S.B. 109 enhances public safety by alerting municipal leaders of residents who may require social services or simply had a utility service shut off in error. Nevertheless, OCC is concerned that providing municipalities with notice of a customer's utility termination could lead to a municipality using the information for a reason other than public safety. A solution to this would be to enact safeguards to ensure that a municipality may only use customer

utility termination information to promote public safety, and such confidential information is neither shared nor disclosed otherwise.

Although OCC does have some privacy concerns with notifying municipalities of a customer's utility termination, overall OCC supports S.B. 109.