

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY

RE: PETITION OF THE OFFICE : DOCKET NO. 22-03-XX
OF CONSUMER COUNSEL :
FOR AN INVESTIGATION :
INTO THE UNITED :
ILLUMINATING COMPANY :
AND EVERSOURCE ENERGY :
REGARDING COLLECTIONS :
PRACTICES DURING THE :
COVID-19 MORATORIUM : MARCH 11, 2022

PETITION OF THE OFFICE OF CONSUMER COUNSEL

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §§ 16-25a and 16-11, the Office of Consumer Counsel (“OCC”), hereby respectfully petitions the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (“Authority”) to commence a new contested proceeding and initiate an investigation into the regulated subsidiaries of Avangrid, Inc. operating in Connecticut (The United Illuminating Company; The Connecticut Natural Gas Company; and Southern Connecticut Gas Company) (collectively, “Avangrid”) and the regulated subsidiaries of Eversource Energy operating in Connecticut (The Connecticut Light and Power d/b/a Eversource Energy and Yankee Gas Services, Inc.) (collectively, “Eversource”) for referring delinquent accounts to outside counsel for collections, resulting in judgments and wage garnishments against active customers, during the Authority’s temporary moratorium period that was designed to protect customers’ health and safety, and to avoid further economic distress on customers during the financial emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

On March 12, 2020, William Tong, Attorney General for the State of Connecticut (“Attorney General”) filed with the Authority a Petition seeking that all regulated utilities be ordered to cease terminations of service to residential customers for non-payment during the State of Emergency caused by the global pandemic of Covid-19 beginning in March of 2020. In response to this petition, on March 12, 2020, the Authority opened Docket No. 20-03-15 and issued orders directing all “gas, electric, and water public service companies regulated by the Authority to implement a Shut-off Moratorium and refrain from terminating utility service to residential customers, except for reasons of public safety, for the duration of the Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency declared by Governor Lamont on March 10, 2020, or until such other time determined by the Authority.” Ruling on Mot. No. 1, Mar. 12, 2020.

On March 17, 2020, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (“DEEP”) filed a Motion in Docket No. 20-03-15 requesting that the scope of the investigation sought by the Attorney General be expanded to include consideration of how “. . . the economic costs of the COVID-19 pandemic will significantly impact low and moderate income individuals and families, underserved communities, and a broad range of businesses in Connecticut.” Mot. No. 002, p. 2. DEEP’s Motion suggested that the Authority consider ordering the suspension of “. . . late fees and other penalties on delinquent customers of all classes . . .”; requiring the “. . . provision of payment plans to all customer classes . . .”; and to “. . . mitigate negative consequences due to non-payment . . .”. *Id.* at 3-4. The Authority allowed DEEP’s Motion and expanded the scope of the investigation in Docket No. 20-03-15 on March 18, 2020.

Upon completing a full investigation, the Authority issued an Interim Decision in Docket No. 20-03-15 on April 29, 2020 (the “Interim Decision”). The Interim Decision directed all Public Service Companies and Electric Suppliers to “offer any customer who requests financial

assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic an adaptable, flexible payment plan.” Interim Decision, p. 3. The payment plan ordered by the Authority was applicable to any customer requesting financial assistance, regardless of determination of financial need; permitted Public Service Utilities to waive all fees or accumulated interest associated with late payments. *Id.* The payment plan was “designed to assist residential, commercial, and industrial customers who have faced unexpected hardships and experienced difficulty in paying their Public Service Utilities’ bills since the declaration of the Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency.” *Id.* at 2. The Interim Decision noted that the Authority “is focused on providing options for all customers to pay what they can, when they can, during this time of uncertainty.” *Id.* at 2. The Interim Decision extended the shut-off moratorium as initially ordered on March 12, 2020, to end on June 1, 2020. *Id.* at 5.

On February 23, 2022, Eversource and Avangrid filed a joint motion seeking clarification as to how the companies should proceed “with respect to the Authority’s orders and rulings that reference the Governor’s [State of Emergency] Declaration,” and more specifically, whether the companies must continue to offer the COVID-19 payment plan to all customers and refrain from disconnecting service for nonpayment. Docket No. 20-03-15, *supra*, Mot. No. 72. As of the date of this filing, the Authority has not yet ruled on this motion.

OCC has consistently supported the termination moratorium and measures to ease the economic burdens on Connecticut ratepayers during the Covid-19 State of Emergency. On October 9, 2020, OCC filed comments in support of extending the moratorium until February 9, 2021, noting, “the COVID-19 pandemic rages unabated. Many Connecticut residents remain out of work, students remain confined to home learning remotely, and small businesses continue to struggle. Indeed, in recent weeks positive COVID-19 cases have begun to increase again through

the Northeast. Accordingly, OCC submits that the moratorium extension is in furtherance of the public interest.”

On February 24, 2021, OCC noted in response to response to Mot. No. 24, “While Connecticut continues its recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, many state residents remain unemployed, underemployed, or otherwise economically disadvantaged. . . . Although OCC remains concerned with growing arrearage balances and encourages those customers who are able to pay their bills to continue to do so, OCC submits that BETP’s position [to refrain from resuming service terminations] holds significant merit at this juncture.”

In a separate docket, No. 18-04-25, the Authority has been investigating issues regarding uncollectible utility accounts and termination policies of the regulated utility companies. *See* Docket No. 18-04-25, *PURA Investigation Regarding Issues Related to Uncollectable Accounts*, Notice of Proceeding (May 16, 2018). In response to interrogatories issued by OCC regarding the companies’ collections practices, both Avangrid and Eversource indicated that they refer delinquent accounts to outside resources for collection activities. *See* Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Eversource response to OCC-04; Avangrid response to OCC-04. In Avangrid’s case, residential balances of \$2500 greater than 90 days can be referred to a legal firm for collection. Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Avangrid response to OCC-04. In Eversource’s case, delinquent accounts are referred to outside collection agencies 35 days after a final bill is issued. Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Eversource response to OCC-04. OCC is still unclear what impact these outsourced collections activities have on customers’ credit reports.

In response to interrogatories issued by the Authority’s Office of Education, Outreach and Enforcement (“EOE”), Avangrid disclosed that the outside counsel referenced in response to OCC’s interrogatory regularly obtains judgments and wage garnishments against Avangrid’s

customers – including those with active accounts. Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Avangrid response to EOE-01. Avangrid further disclosed that it obtained hundreds of judgments against United Illuminating, Connecticut Natural Gas, and Southern Connecticut Gas customers during calendar years 2020 and 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 State of Emergency, as well as dozens of wage garnishments. *Id.* Avangrid further disclosed that hundreds of these customers were under hardship designation when judgments and wage garnishments against them were obtained on its behalf. *Id.* See Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Avangrid response to OCC-7, Attachment 1. Based upon the dates provided by Avangrid, it appears that these collections practices continued to take place during and throughout the COVID-19 State of Emergency, and while the Authority’s orders issued in Docket No. 20-03-15 remained active.

Eversource disclosed the same concerning facts regarding its own collection practices for customers of The Connecticut Light and Power Company and Yankee Gas,¹ albeit to a markedly lesser degree than Avangrid.² Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Eversource response to EOE-02.

From OCC’s perspective, these collection practices are in direct contradiction to the Authority’s stated objective to protect Connecticut customers from financial distress caused by late or past due utility balances during the COVID-19 emergency. Despite the Authority’s

¹ In one instance in calendar year 2020, it appears that a customer complained that he/she had a \$0 balance and was unable to establish service with Eversource due to a freeze on his credit. See Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Eversource response to OCC-7, Attachment 1.

² Avangrid companies report obtaining a total of 263 judgments against customers in calendar years 2020 and 2021, and 80 wage garnishments. Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Avangrid response to EOE-01. Eversource companies report obtaining a total of 44 judgments in the same scope of time, and 13 wage garnishments. Docket No. 18-04-25, *supra*, Eversource response to EOE-02. The disparity between these numbers is concerning because Eversource serves approximately 80% of Connecticut’s customer base, which suggests that Avangrid’s collections activity was disproportionately more aggressive than Eversource’s during the moratorium period. OCC is particularly concerned by these statistics knowing that Avangrid service areas include Connecticut communities with a high proportion of low-income households (e.g., New Haven, Bridgeport) facing the highest energy burden in the state, who were also hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic both in health and economic terms. See e.g. <https://www.ctdatahaven.org/blog/survey-results-quantify-how-each-connecticut-town-experienced-pandemic-throughout-2021>.

articulated focus upon “providing options for all customers to pay what they can, when they can, during this time of uncertainty,” Avangrid and Eversource referred numerous past-due accounts to outside counsel, who, on the companies’ behalf, sued customers and obtained judgments and wage garnishments against them throughout the economic and employment crisis caused by a global pandemic. Accordingly, OCC requests that the Authority immediately commence an investigation into this matter to gain a greater understanding of the company’s practices with respect to activity related to collections, credit reporting, and obtaining judgements and wage garnishments, and to evaluate and clarify specific directives and compliance orders to help ensure adequate protections for struggling consumers during states of emergency, and assess all such penalties and relief as authorized by Connecticut law. On behalf of Connecticut consumers, OCC thanks the Authority for its consideration of this petition.

Respectfully submitted,

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF CONSUMER COUNSEL

CLAIRE E. COLEMAN
INTERIM CONSUMER COUNSEL

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I do hereby certify that on this day the foregoing document was filed with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, and copies thereof were served upon each person designated on the official service list in this proceeding in accordance with R.C.S.A. § 16-1-15.

Dated at New Britain, Connecticut this 11th day of March 2022.

/s/ Tom Wiehl
Thomas Wiehl, Esq.
Commissioner of the Superior Court

EXHIBIT A

CL&P/YGS dba Eversource Energy
Docket 18-04-25
Set OCC-02
Date Issued January 19, 2022
Q- OCC-03
Page 1 of 36

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Please describe the Company's workflow and timing for collections efforts. Include when a customer account is considered "inactive due to nonpayment," when "delinquent accounts are placed for collections," and how "delinquent accounts" are determined. What is the procedure for notification to a customer that an unpaid account will be reported to a credit agency, including when a customer is issued a final bill?

Response:

An account becomes inactive in two different ways. The first is when the customer contacts the Company and indicates they are moving out of the location and no longer require service. The account will become inactive as of the date the customer reports they are moving out. A customer's account can also become inactive if it has been shut off for non-payment *and* not reconnected within seven days after the disconnect. In both scenarios a customer is sent a final bill and a subsequent letter informing the customer that an unpaid balance exists and if the balance remains unpaid, the account may be referred to a collections agency and be reported to the credit bureaus.

If an unpaid balance is assigned to a collection agency, the collection agency is required to comply with all applicable federal and state laws, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and may report unpaid account balances to a credit bureau as part of their collection efforts and process.

See OCC-04 for the process and timing.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Please describe the Company's process and timeline for when it uses a third-party for collections. At what stage and by whom could a customer's account be reported to a credit bureau? Does the Company ever report a customer's account that is in a payment plan to credit agencies, and if so under what circumstances?

Response:

Customers on a payment plan are not sent to a collection agency nor are they reported to credit bureaus. If the customer is on a payment plan at the time their service ends, the customer can continue with the terms of that payment plan, and their account will not be placed with a collection agency or reported to the credit bureaus as long as they make their required payments.

For inactive accounts that are not on a payment plan, including those written off, the Company utilizes third party collection agencies that specialize in recovering unpaid balances of inactive and written off accounts. The timeline of processes from final bill to collections agency to credit bureau reporting is:

- 35 days after the final bill is issued, an account that remains unpaid is referred to a collections agency and will remain with a collection agency until the statute of limitations expires.
- ~4 months (~120 days) after the final bill is issued, the account is written off.
- ~5 months (~150 days) after the final bill is issued, the account is reported to the credit bureaus by a collection agency.

The third-party collection agencies the Company contracts with report to the credit bureaus on the Eversource debt. If the customer's written-off account is at a collection agency, their account will be reported to the credit bureaus and the balance information updated monthly when payments are made. If at any point in time the account is paid, the credit bureau report is updated to reflect new balance or that the account is paid in full.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Has the Company reported any customer accounts to a credit reporting agency in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

Response:

Included within the last five years is the period from February 4, 2017 to February 23, 2017 when the Company had begun a Credit Bureau Reporting pilot that reported all active customer payment behavior to the credit bureaus. The Company voluntarily ended the pilot due to customer and external stakeholder feedback and has consistently been on record since that we have no plans to report active customer payment behavior to the credit bureaus.

The Company contracts with third party collection agencies to collect on inactive accounts that have been written off. Approximately 5 months after the customer is sent a final bill the collection agencies report written off accounts to credit bureaus such as Experian, Equifax, and Transunion. See OCC-06 for account totals.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Has the Company reported any customer accounts to a collections agency in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

Response:

Customers with active service are not assigned to a collection agency.

As part of the normal collections process for inactive and written off accounts the Company contracts with collection agencies to collect on accounts where a customer no longer has service and has left an outstanding balance. The practice of utilizing collection agencies is an industry-wide best practice as a tool to reduce bad debt. Assigning accounts to a collection agency is different from reporting to a credit bureau.

Approximately 70% of accounts that write off are from customers who move out of a location and no longer require service. Additionally, customers with a tenure at a location of less than 2 years account for 46% of the write-offs. There are approximately 247,000 accounts with past due balances of \$246M that are assigned to the collection agencies, these accounts range in age from 35 days after the final bill to 6 years past due.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Andino, Lissette
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Has the Company received any complaints through the PURA Consumer Division related to credit reporting in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

Response:

Included within the last five years is the period from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2021 when the Company had begun a Credit Bureau Reporting pilot that reported all active customer payment behavior to the credit bureaus. The Company voluntarily ended the pilot due to external stakeholder feedback and has consistently been on record since that we have no plans to report active customer payment behavior to the credit bureaus.

See Attachment 1 for account details that received inquiries or complaints through the PURA Consumer Division related to credit bureau reporting over the last five years, including a few customer accounts from within that pilot period.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Has the Company submitted for Authority Approval any changes to its customer service practices related to collections and or credit reporting in the past five years? If yes, please summarize, and include distinctions between customers designated hardship status designation under Conn. Gen. Stat. §§. 16-262c and 262d, and Regs. Conn. State Agencies §. 16-3-100(a)(6), as compared to COVID-19 payment plans.

Response:

Yes, the Company has submitted for Authority approval proposed changes to its customer service practices related to collections and/or credit bureau reporting in the past five years. The Company lists below a few of the key changes:

- Docket No. 16-05-26: On February 23, 2017, the Company submitted a letter notifying the Authority that the Company was voluntarily canceling the full credit bureau reporting pilot.
- Docket Nos. 10-12-02 and 14-05-06: On December 15, 2017, the Company requested Authority approval for certain revisions to the Companies' security deposit procedures. The changes proposed included requesting that a security deposit be assessed on prospective residential customers at the time of request for a service connection under certain circumstances as consistent with existing regulations. On May 8, 2018, the Authority approved those changes.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: As a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Company explained in Written Comments filed on March 26, 2020 and in discovery response Q-EL-17, filed on April 2, 2020 in Docket 20-03-15, Emergency Petition of William Tong, Attorney General for The State Of Connecticut, For A Proceeding To Establish A State Of Emergency Utility Shut-Off Moratorium, several changes recently enacted or which the Company may propose to the Company's collection practices such as:
 - Applying deposits to customers with outstanding balances
 - Relaxing the enrollment requirements for the Matching Payment Program and New Start
 - Offering extended payment plans

- Docket No. 20-03-15: On January 29, 2021, the Company filed a motion seeking Authority approval for a temporary one-time modification to the Companies' longstanding practices regarding annual October 31 expiration of and re-certification requirements for a customer's financial hardship status. On February 11, 2021, the Authority granted this motion.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: On May 6, 2021, PURA EOE filed Motion No. 38 requesting that the Authority approve the Company and Avangrid to restart Non-Residential disconnections. On May 27, 2021, the Authority approved this motion.
- Docket No. 20-07-01: On September 28, 2021, the Authority granted Eversource Motion No. 6 seeking Authority approval to automatically re-certify customers that were coded as hardship during the previous year.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: On November 19, 2021, the Company filed jointly with Avangrid Motion No. 55 requesting approval of transitional payment plans for Residential Non-Hardship customers. On December 10, 2021, the Authority denied that proposal.
- Docket No. 21-07-01: On January 26, 2022, the Company filed Motion No. 13 seeking Authority approval to auto-enroll eligible and verified financial hardship customers in New Start and to provide notification to customers in a similar manner to the process the Authority approved when granting Motion No. 10 which was filed by the Company in Docket No. 20-07-04 in Spring 2021. The Company notes that the 100,000 electric and gas customers the Company automatically re-certified financial hardship status for in November 2021 will be eligible for automatic enrollment in New Start under the Company's Motion No. 13 proposal.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: As directed by the Authority in its December 23, 2021 ruling on Motion No. 57, the Company filed a joint motion with Avangrid on February 1, 2022 seeking approval to restart its previously authorized late payment fee tariff provisions.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Please demonstrate the mechanisms and safeguards the Company has implemented to ensure it is in full compliance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16-262d(g).

Response:

The Company does not currently directly report customer payment information to credit rating agencies.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Is the Company prohibited from reporting customer accounts to credit bureaus under any circumstances? Explain.

Response:

Conn. Gen. Stat §16-262d(g) allows electric distribution and gas providers to report past due customer accounts to credit bureaus if the account is more than 120 days delinquent.

Date Filed: February 09, 2022

Witness: Traynor, Daniel M
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Please demonstrate the mechanisms and safeguards the Company has implemented to ensure it is in full compliance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16-262d(g).

Response:

The Company does not currently directly report customer payment information to credit rating agencies.

Date Filed: March 01, 2022

Witness: N/A

Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Does the Company ever report a customer's account that is actively participating in a Company payment plan to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm, and if so under what circumstances?

Response:

No. The Company does not refer a customer's account that is actively participating in a payment plan or an arrearage forgiveness plan to a third-party collection agency or legal collection firm.

Date Filed: March 01, 2022

Witness: N/A

Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Does the Company interpret the “Shut off moratorium” from Docket No. 20-03- 15, Emergency Petition Of William Tong, Attorney General For The State Of Connecticut, For A Proceeding To Establish A State Of Emergency Utility ShutOff Moratorium, to include a moratorium on reporting accounts in arrears to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm during the pendency of the moratorium?

Response:

PURA defined the “shut-off moratorium” in Docket No. 20-03-15 in its Rulings on Motions No. 1 and 2 initiating the docket. Specifically, in those rulings PURA directed the state’s utilities to refrain from terminating utility service to residential and non-residential customers for a certain period of time except for reasons of public safety. The Company does not send active customers to third-party collections agencies.

Date Filed: March 01, 2022

Witness: N/A

Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

Before the Company refers an account to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm, what if any steps does the company take to enroll a customer in a payment plan?

Response:

Referring accounts to legal collection firms occurs only after all prior collections efforts have not yielded results. Such collections efforts may include, but are not limited to, notification of arrearage forgiveness programs or flexible payment plans through various communication channels. Once an account is referred, legal collection firms are directed to work with the customer to enroll on arrearage forgiveness programs or flexible payment plans prior filing a case.

OCC-003

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-003 Q: Please describe the Company's workflow and timing for collections efforts. Include when a customer account is considered "inactive due to nonpayment," when "delinquent accounts are placed for collections," and how "delinquent accounts" are determined. What is the procedure for notification to a customer that an unpaid account will be reported to a credit agency, including when a customer is issued a final bill?

OCC-003 A: Accounts are considered "delinquent" if there is a balance owed greater than 33 days. The customer will receive a shut off notice, reminder call and final delinquent notice advising that they are eligible for disconnection. If disconnected and the customer does not make a payment or arrangement within 10 days the account becomes inactive and is finalized. Finalized accounts are referred to a collection agency 44 days after becoming final. The Company no longer directly reports accounts to the credit agency/bureaus.

OCC-004

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-004 Q: Please describe the Company's process and timeline for when it uses a third-party for collections. At what stage and by whom could a customer's account be reported to a credit bureau? Does the Company ever report a customer's account that is in a payment plan to credit agencies, and if so under what circumstances?

OCC-004 A: Residential Active accounts with balances of \$2500 greater than 90 days can be referred to a legal firm for collection activity; the legal firm does not report accounts to the credit bureaus.

Finalized accounts with balances greater than \$25 will be referred to a third-party collection agency 44 days after becoming final. Collection agencies will report accounts with unpaid balances \$100 or greater to the credit bureaus.

OCC-004 Supplement

The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 28, 2022

OCC-004 Q:

Please describe the Company's process and timeline for when it uses a third-party for collections. At what stage and by whom could a customer's account be reported to a credit bureau? Does the Company ever report a customer's account that is in a payment plan to credit agencies, and if so under what circumstances?

OCC-004 A:

The Company is providing this supplemental response to expand on its original response submitted on February 4th.

Prior to mid-2021, accounts with balances of \$1000 at 60 days of delinquency could be referred to a legal firm for collection activity. As of mid-2021, residential active accounts with balances of \$2500 greater than 90 days can be referred to a legal firm for collection activity; the legal firm does not report accounts to the credit bureaus.

Finalized accounts with balances greater than \$25 will be referred to a third-party collection agency 44 days after becoming final. Collection agencies will report accounts with unpaid balances \$100 or greater to the credit bureaus.

The Company does not report a customer's account that is in a payment plan to any credit bureaus/agencies.

OCC-005

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-005 Q: Has the Company reported any customer accounts to a credit reporting agency in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

OCC-005 A: The Company stopped credit reporting in March 2018. Previously, the Company reported to the credit reporting agency (aka credit bureaus) on a monthly basis; each month's file contained over 380k customers. All residential accounts were reported regardless of account status.

Accounts delinquent 90 days or greater from the invoice date and owing more than \$200 were reported as delinquent. Current accounts (accounts delinquent less than 90 days) and delinquent accounts owing less than \$200 were reported as current.

OCC-006

Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-006 Q: Has the Company reported any customer accounts to a collections agency in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

OCC-006 A: As shown in the table below, over the past five years the Company has reported on average 20,000 final accounts and 6,000 active accounts for collections. Due to the voluminous number of accounts, the Company is not able to provide the details requested for every account with this response. The Company will endeavor to compile this voluminous data if the OCC deems it necessary.

The Company uses collection agencies for finalized accounts that still have a balance owed of \$25 or more 44 days after move out, regardless of the reason (customer request, non-pay disconnect). The following is a summary of finalized accounts reported to collection agencies:

Final Accounts	# submitted	\$ submitted
2017	21460	\$16,771,621
2018	17877	\$14,067,543
2019	18743	\$15,722,684
2020	21937	\$16,375,137
2021	21293	\$20,714,129

The Company also uses a legal collections firm to collect on active accounts. Prior to mid-2021 past due balances greater than \$1000 at 60 days delinquent were referred. This criterion changed mid 2021 to greater than \$2500 at 90 days delinquent. A summary of accounts submitted to a legal collections firm is as follows:

Active Accounts	# submitted	\$ submitted
2017	4764	\$16,771,621
2018	5590	\$14,067,543
2019	5833	\$15,722,684
2020	8827	\$16,375,137
2021	5075	\$20,714,129

OCC-006 Revised

Date Submitted: February 28, 2022

OCC-006 Q: Has the Company reported any customer accounts to a collections agency in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

OCC-006 A: This response has been revised to correct the figures in the Active Accounts table below to provide the corrections to the amounts listed in the “\$ submitted” column. The table in the original response included incorrect data.

As shown in the table below, over the past five years the Company has reported on average 20,000 final accounts and 6,000 active accounts for collections. Due to the voluminous number of accounts, the Company is not able to provide the details requested for every account with this response. The Company will endeavor to compile this voluminous data if the OCC deems it necessary.

The Company uses collection agencies for finalized accounts that still have a balance owed of \$25 or more 44 days after move out, regardless of the reason (customer request, non-pay disconnect). The following is a summary of finalized accounts reported to collection agencies:

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2021	21293	\$20,714,129

The Company also uses a legal collections firm to collect on active accounts. Prior to mid-2021, past due balances greater than \$1000 at 60 days delinquent were referred. This criterion changed mid 2021 to greater than \$2500 at 90 days delinquent. A summary of accounts submitted to a legal collections firm is as follows:

Active Accounts	# submitted	\$ submitted
2017	4122	\$19,470,004
2018	5325	\$21,162,846
2019	4722	\$12,369,985
2020	8509	\$18,565,850
2021	5075	\$10,734,691

OCC-007

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-007 Q: Has the Company received any complaints through the PURA Consumer Division related to credit reporting in the past five years? If yes, please provide account details including but not limited to account status (inactive, written off, disconnected, etc.), amount past due, days past due, etc.

OCC-007 A: OCC-007 UI Attachment 1 contains complaints received through the PURA Consumer Division related to credit reporting over the past five years.

OCC-008

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

Page 22 of 36

Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-008 Q: Has the Company submitted for Authority Approval any changes to its customer service practices related to collections and or credit reporting in the past five years? If yes, please summarize, and include distinctions between customers designated hardship status designation under Conn. Gen. Stat. §§. 16-262c and 262d, and Regs. Conn. State Agencies §. 16-3-100(a)(6), as compared to COVID-19 payment plans.

OCC-008 A: Following are the changes submitted for Authority approval in the past five years:

- Docket No. 16-06-04: UI filed Motion No. 41 (pursuant to Order No. 6) requesting approval for UI to cease credit reporting on all customers. PURA approval received March 19, 2018.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: On February 19, 2021 UI filed response to CL&P-YGS Motion No. 22. The Company notified the Authority that UI voluntarily agreed to a temporary one-time modification to automatically re-certify customer previously classified as financial hardship.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: EOE filed Motion 38 on May 6, 2021 on behalf of the Company requesting approval to restart Non-Residential disconnections. Authority approved on May 27, 2021.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: EOE filed Motion 45 on June 25, 2021 on behalf of the Company requesting approval to restart Residential Non-Hardship disconnections. Authority approved on August 6, 2021.
- Docket No. 21-07-01: On September 27, 2021 UI filed response in support of Eversource's Motion No. 6 which was seeking approval to automatically extend financial hardship status for all customers who qualified for financial hardships status for the 2021 hardship year. Authority approved on September 28, 2021.
- Docket No. 20-03-15: On November 19, 2021, the Company filed jointly with Eversource Motion No. 55 requesting approval of transitional payment plans for Residential Non-Hardship customers. The Authority denied the proposal on December 10, 2021.
- Docket No. 16-06-04: UI filed Motion 59 (pursuant to Order No. 6) on December 9, 2021. The Company requested approval to resume enforcement of its late charge policy for non-residential and residential non-hardship customer. Authority approval is pending

OCC-009

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-009 Q: Please provide information for the last five years on the number of credit reporting inquiries/complaints/disputes (and outcomes of same), including the number of customer credit disputes received, the number of customer credit disputes resolved, the disposition of resolved customer credit disputes and the cost of customer credit dispute resolution; and how the inquiry/complaint/dispute was received.

OCC-009 A: OCC-009 UI Attachment 1 contains a summary of how disputes filed through e-OSCAR (a web based, automated system that enables Data Furnishers and Credit Reporting Agencies to create and respond to consumer credit history disputes) were resolved in 2017. The summary report includes the number of accounts disputed by response type, regardless of account status.

In 2018, after notifying the Credit Bureau that the Company would no longer be submitting credit reporting all Company reported information was deleted at the credit bureaus.

OCC-010

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-010 Q: Is the Company prohibited from reporting customer accounts to credit bureaus under any circumstances? Explain.

OCC-010 A: The Company is unaware of any prohibition from reporting to credit bureaus under any circumstances.

OCC-011

**The United Illuminating Company
Wasilnak**

Witness: Kathleen

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 4, 2022

OCC-011 Q: Please demonstrate the mechanisms and safeguards the Company has implemented to ensure it is in full compliance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16-262d(g).

OCC-011 A: The Company no longer directly reports customers to the credit bureaus.

OCC-012

The United Illuminating Company

Witness: Lisa Rosso

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: March 2, 2022

OCC-012 Q:

Does the Company ever report a customer's account that is actively participating in a Company payment plan to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm, and if so under what circumstances?

OCC-012 A:

The Company does not report a customer's account that is actively participating in a payment plan to any third-party collection agency or legal collections firm.

OCC-013

The United Illuminating Company

Witness: Lisa Rosso

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: March 2, 2022

OCC-013 Q:

Does the Company interpret the “Shut off moratorium” from Docket No. 20-03- 15, Emergency Petition Of William Tong, Attorney General For The State Of Connecticut, For A Proceeding To Establish A State Of Emergency Utility ShutOff Moratorium, to include a moratorium on reporting accounts in arrears to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm during the pendency of the moratorium?

OCC-013 A:

The Company does not interpret the “Shut off moratorium” from Docket No 20-03-15 to include a moratorium on reporting accounts in arrears to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm during the pendency of the moratorium.

OCC-014

The United Illuminating Company

Witness: Lisa Rosso

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: March 2, 2022

OCC-014 Q:

Before the Company refers an account to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm, what if any steps does the company take to enroll a customer in a payment plan?

OCC-014 A:

Before the Company refers an account to a third-party collection agency or legal collections firm, the following steps are taken:

1. A Shut-off notice is mailed to a customer whose balance includes a delinquency of 33 days or greater. The Shut-off notice is mailed five days after the customer's invoice was mailed, if the account remains delinquent at that time.
 - The Shut-off notice for residential customers includes instructions advising "Enrollment and participation in a hardship plan or payment arrangement will prevent shut off. All customers are now eligible for at least one payment plan. You can prevent shut off by calling us at 800.722.5584 to enroll in a payment arrangement or to see if you qualify for hardship benefits."
 - The Shut-off notice for commercial customers includes instructions advising "Enrollment and participation in a payment arrangement will prevent service disconnection. All customers are now eligible for at least one payment plan. You can prevent service disconnection by calling us at 800.722.5584 to establish a payment arrangement."
2. During the timeframe that the initial Shut-off notice is mailed, the Company also sends an email to the customer, if an email address has been provided.
 - The email to residential customers includes instructions advising "All customers are now eligible for at least one payment plan. You can prevent shut off by calling us at 800.722.5584 to enroll in a payment arrangement or to see if you qualify for hardship benefits."
 - The email to commercial customers includes instructions advising "All customers are now eligible for at least one payment plan. You can prevent service disconnection by calling us at 800.722.5584 to establish a payment arrangement."
3. If the delinquency remains seven days after the first Shut-off notice, a final notice is mailed to the customer at that time.
 - The final notice for residential customers includes instructions advising "You can prevent service disconnection by calling us at 800.722.5584 before mm/dd/yy to

establish a payment arrangement or to see if you qualify for hardship benefits. All customers are now eligible for at least one payment plan.”

- The final notice for commercial customers includes instructions advising “You can prevent service disconnection by calling us at 800.722.5584 to establish a payment arrangement. All customers are now eligible for at least one payment plan.”
4. During the same timeframe that the final notice is mailed, a telephone call is also placed to the customer as an additional reminder.
- The call placed to residential customers includes instructions advising “You can prevent your service from being disconnected by contacting us to pay your bill or enroll in a payment plan, including the COVID-19 Payment Program which offers plans up to 24 months, with no down payments, fees or interest, or a hardship payment plan with payments as low as \$50 per month. Call UI at 800-722-5584 so we can discuss the best options for you.”
 - The call placed to business customers includes instructions advising “You can prevent your service from being disconnected by contacting us to pay your bill or enroll in a payment plan, including the COVID-19 Payment Program which offers plans up to 24 months, with no down payments, fees or interest.”

Note that the Company only refers active residential accounts to a legal firm for collections if the balance is \$2500 or greater with an arrearage of 90 days.

Date Filed: March 08, 2022

Witness: N/A

Request from: Office of Education, Outreach, and Enforcement

Question:

Please see the response of Avangrid to EOE-1.

- a. Please indicate if Eversource engages in the practices Avangrid discussed in response to EOE-1.
- b. Does Eversource refer active accounts for collections activities?
- c. Does Eversource or any outside collections agent obtain judgments against and wage garnishment against Eversource customers with active accounts?
- d. If yes to c, how many judgments and wage garnishments against customers with active accounts have been obtained from 2018 to the present, indicated by year and by company (i.e., CL&P or Yankee).
- e. If yes to c, are these judgements or wage garnishments reported to credit bureaus/agencies? If yes, how many have been reported since 2018, indicated by year and by company?
- f. Does Eversource refer active customers with a hardship designation for collections? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?
- g. If yes to f, have customers with a hardship designation been the subject of judgments or wage garnishments? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?
- h. Does Eversource refer any customers actively participating in payment arrangements for collections? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?
- i. If yes to h, have customers actively participating in payment arrangements been the subject of judgments or wage garnishments? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?

Response:

- a. Referring accounts to legal collection firms occurs only after all prior collections efforts have not yielded results. The Company may refer substantially aged active accounts with minimum delinquent balance of \$2,000 for residential customers and \$5,000 for non-residential customers.
- b. Yes. Please refer to part a of EOE-2.
- c. Yes, the Company’s legal collection firms obtain judgments and wage garnishments through the judicial process.
- d. The following table provides the number of judgments and wage garnishments from 2018 to present, broken down by company and year:

CL&P d/b/a Eversource Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Judgments	291	206	44	1	542
Wage Garnishments	117	52	13	0	182

YG d/b/a Eversource Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Judgments	31	15	0	0	46
Wage Garnishments	8	2	0	0	10

- e. The Company nor any of its legal collection firms do not report judgments or wage garnishments to credit bureaus.
- f. The Company refers active accounts with hardship designation to legal collection firms for collections. The following table indicates the number of active accounts with hardship designation referred to legal collection firms, broken down by company and year:

CL&P d/b/a Eversource Active Hardship Accounts Referral to Legal Collection Firms				
2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
611	118	9	0	738
YG d/b/a Eversource Active Hardship Accounts Referral to Legal Collection Firms				
2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
1	2	0	0	3

- g. Yes, the following table indicates the number of active hardship accounts where judgments or wage garnishments were obtained, broken down by company and year:

CL&P d/b/a Eversource Hardship Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Hardship - Judgment	265	168	36	1	470
Hardship - Wage Garnishment	117	52	13	0	182
YG d/b/a Eversource Hardship Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
v					
Hardship - Judgment	2	0	0	0	2
Hardship - Wage Garnishment	8	2	0	0	10

- h. The Company does not refer customers who are actively participating in a payment arrangement or arrearage forgiveness program to legal collection firms.
- i. Not applicable.

EOE-001

**Connecticut Natural Gas Corporation
Southern Connecticut Gas Company
The United Illuminating Company**

Witness: Tracey Pelella

Docket No. 18-04-25

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Date Submitted: February 18, 2022

EOE-001 Q:

On January 19, 2022, EOE received a complaint against CNG from customer Denise G. As part of EOE's investigation of this complaint, CNG indicated in 2018 there was a judgment obtained against this customer and a wage garnishment executed. EOE then asked and CNG replied with the following: "Was the account active when CNG did this? Yes Has the account ever been inactive? No" CNG further stated that the account was with the company's outside counsel.

- a. In Response to OCC-4, UI stated, "Residential Active accounts with balances of \$2500 greater than 90 days can be referred to a legal firm for collection activity; the legal firm does not report accounts to the credit bureaus." Was Ms. G's account noted above referred to outside counsel as part of the process noted in UI's Response to OCC-4?
- b. If no to a, please explain the response to the intake noted above.
- c. If yes to a, does the outside counsel obtain judgments against and wage garnishment against Avangrid customers with active accounts?
- d. If yes to c, how many judgments and wage garnishments has the outside counsel obtained from 2018 to the present, indicated by year and by company?
- e. If yes to c, are these judgements or wage garnishments reported to credit bureaus/agencies (by Avangrid, the outside counsel, or as part of the judgment and/or garnishment process)? If yes, how many have been reported since 2018, indicated by year and by company?
- f. Are any customers with a hardship designation reported to the outside counsel for collections? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?
- g. If yes to f, have customers with a hardship designation been the subject of judgments or wage garnishments? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?
- h. Are any customers actively participating in payment arrangements reported to the outside counsel for collections? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?

- i. If yes to h, have customers actively participating in payment arrangements been the subject of judgments or wage garnishments? If so, how many from 2018 to present, indicated by year and by company?

EOE-001 A:

- a. Yes, Ms. G’s account noted above was referred to outside counsel. The process noted in UI’s response to OCC-4 is the same across all three companies (UI, CNG and SCG).
- b. Not applicable.
- c. Yes, the outside counsel obtains judgments and wage garnishments against Avangrid customers with active accounts.
- d. The following chart provides the number of judgments and wage garnishments from 2018 to present, broken down by company and by year:

UI Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	Year				
Action	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Judgment	259	297	106	52	714
Wage Garnishment	73	76	28	8	185
Grand Total	332	373	134	60	899

CNG Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	Year				
Action	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Judgment	122	125	56	4	307
Wage Garnishment	35	29	26	3	93
Grand Total	157	154	82	7	400

SCG Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	Year				
Action	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Judgment	155	73	34	11	273
Wage Garnishment	52	33	13	2	100
Grand Total	207	106	47	13	373

- e. No, neither Avangrid nor our outside counsel reports judgments or wage garnishments to credit bureaus/agencies. However, judgment and wage garnishment information is available to the public via court records.
- f. Yes, customers with a hardship designation are reported to the outside counsel for collections. The following chart provides the number of customers reported to outside counsel for collections, broken down by company and by year:

UI Hardship Referrals 2018 - Present					
	Year				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Hardship	387	513	1113	644	2657

CNG Hardship Referrals 2018 - Present					
	Year				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Hardship	61	90	270	332	753

SCG Hardship Referrals 2018 - Present					
	Year				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Hardship	96	132	339	436	1003

- g. Yes, customers with a hardship designation have been the subject of judgments or wage garnishments. The following chart shows the number of customers that were subject to judgments or wage garnishments, broken down by company and by year:

UI Hardship Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	Year				
Report Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Hardship - Judgment	3	46	36	12	97
Hardship - Wage Garnishment	1	11	12	1	25
Grand Total	4	57	48	13	122

CNG Hardship Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	Year				
Report Category	2012	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
Hardship - Judgment	1	2	32	24	59
Hardship - Wage Garnishment		2		6	8
Grand Total	1	4	32	30	67

SCG Hardship Judgments and Wage Garnishments 2018 - Present					
	Year				
Report Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Hardship - Judgment		17	18	3	38
Hardship - Wage Garnishment	2	5	2		9
Grand Total	2	22	20	3	47

- h. No, customers that are actively participating in a payment arrangement with the Companies (payment plan, MPP or MaPP) are not referred to outside counsel.
- i. Not applicable.