



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CUB URGES ILLINOIS CONSUMERS TO CONTACT THEIR UTILITIES TO ACCESS CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) on Monday urged Illinois consumers to contact their utility companies to take advantage of consumer protections available to them due to the pandemic.

“If you are struggling to pay your bills, immediately contact your utility to find out what protections are available, and set up a plan to prevent disconnection,” CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. “These protections are available for a limited time and only for customers who call their utility and state they are experiencing financial hardship because of the pandemic.”

In June, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) approved landmark consumer protections negotiated by a coalition of consumer advocates—including CUB—and these utilities: Ameren Illinois, Aqua Illinois, ComEd, Illinois American, Nicor Gas, North Shore Gas, Peoples Gas and Utilities Inc.

The following protections are available only to customers who call and state they are experiencing hardship due to the pandemic:

- **Waiving deposits.** Until Dec. 26, utilities must waive deposits connected to late payment or non-payment, arrearages, or credit-related issues for customers experiencing financial hardship. Also, utilities will not report late payments and nonpayment for active customers to credit bureaus and reporting agencies.
- **Consumer-friendly payment plans.** Utilities are currently offering longer Deferred Payment Arrangements (DPAs)—plans that help people pay off debt with a utility. DPAs for customers who are LIHEAP-eligible or express financial hardship will not require a down payment and will be extended to 24 months. (The deadline for this benefit could be extended beyond Dec. 26—and CUB is urging utilities to do so—but the watchdog group advised consumers to still call their utilities immediately.)

Some utilities also have a Bill Payment Assistance Program that offers some debt forgiveness for eligible utility customers who apply. Each utility’s program will differ in terms of available funding, the amount allotted to each customer and the way it is administered. CUB urged consumers to ask their utility companies about the Bill Payment Assistance Program.

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Consumers should contact their utilities to access these consumer protections:

Ameren Illinois — 1-800-755-5000

Aqua Illinois — 1-877-987-2782

ComEd — 1-800-334-7661

Illinois American Water — 1-800-422-2782

Nicor Gas — 1-888-642-6748

North Shore Gas — 1-866-556-6004

Peoples Gas — 1-866-556-6001

Utilities Inc. — 1-800-831-2359

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*CUB is Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, it has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping block rate hikes, secure refunds, and fight for clean, low-cost energy. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, **1-800-669-5556**, or visit its website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.*