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**Public Input Sought on Energy Programs to Help Low-Income Customers
— Statewide Approach to Help Struggling Low-Income Families Under Consideration —**

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) announced today that it will hold a series of public statement hearings around the State on a proposal calling for a new statewide approach to standardize utility low-income programs to reflect best practices, streamline the regulatory process, and ensure consistency with the Commission's statutory and policy objectives. In January, the Commission opened a proceeding to examine the low-income programs offered by the major investor-owned electric and gas companies. The proceeding is part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) initiative, a comprehensive strategy to build a clean, resilient, and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers.

One of the principal overall goals of REV is to keep energy costs affordable for all consumers, including low-income customers. This proceeding, however, focuses specifically on the energy burden (i.e. the percentage of a household's total income that is spent on energy bills) faced by low-income households. Designing optimal programs to address low-income customer needs requires the input of all interested parties, particularly low-income customers. These hearings will provide an important opportunity for low-income customers and low-income customer advocates to directly voice their interests and concerns about how utilities deliver programs to benefit low-income households.

As part of the process, Department of Public Service staff filed a report on the results of an examination of utility low-income programs. The report included a straw proposal for a new approach that addresses design and implementation elements including eligibility, enrollment processes, benefit structures, rate discount levels, treatment of participant arrears, reconnection fees, budget billing, and cost recovery. The staff report seeks to strike a balance between ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable customers are met while at the same time not creating an intolerable burden on others. The Commission welcomes public comment to ensure the approach that is selected reflects input of all participants.

The low-income proceeding is one element of a broader low- and moderate-income (LMI) energy consumer strategy that New York is pursuing under REV and its 2015 State Energy Plan, to improve energy affordability for low-income customers, and to expand LMI communities' access to the benefits of energy efficiency, solar power, and other clean energy resources.

For example, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has included a major annual funding commitment to the LMI sector in its proposed 10-year Clean Energy Fund (CEF) filing currently before the Commission. The State also created an LMI-energy working group tasked with delivering on initiatives to help implement and enhance the impact of NYSERDA's

CEF LMI commitment, as well as the LMI- and energy-related policies and programs of other State agencies. The LMI working group, in consultation with various LMI stakeholders, has developed a work plan with a broad range of actions, including:

- Coordinating and extending the reach of various existing LMI-targeted State energy programs, such as NYSEERDA’s Empower program, NYS Homes and Community Renewal’s Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), and NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance’s Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP);
- Expanding opportunities for LMI households and communities to access solar energy through shared solar projects;
- Helping LMI communities develop their own comprehensive clean energy plans;
- Increasing the adoption of clean energy strategies and penetration of distributed energy resources in affordable housing development and preservation projects;
- Pursuing energy sector workforce development opportunities; and
- Demonstrating the intersection of energy and health benefits through comprehensive home improvements in certain LMI communities.

The State also recognizes the need to continuously and actively engage with LMI communities, customers, and stakeholder groups as these initiatives are developed and as associated REV proceedings take shape. In the low-income proceeding, the Commission has been accepting public comments since the case was opened in January. The Commission held two technical conferences prior to the development of the staff straw proposal, and it held a third technical conference after the straw proposal was released to clarify issues. The Commission is reaching out to the public directly through these hearings to ensure the greatest participation.

Public Statement Hearings

The public will have an opportunity to present comments at hearings before the Consumer Advocate Michael Corso. A verbatim transcript of the hearings will be made for inclusion in the record of the proceeding. The public statement hearings will be held as follows:

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

Crandall Library, Christine L. McDonald Room
251 Glen St., Glens Falls, NY

Information Session 2:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 3:00 p.m.

Information Session 5:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 6:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

Town Hall
Overrocker Road, Poughkeepsie, NY

Information Session 2:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 3:00 p.m.

Information Session 6:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2015

Buffalo Central Library
1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo, NY

Information Session 2:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 3:00 p.m.

Information Session 6:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 7:00 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2015

NYS Department of Public Service, 4th Floor
90 Church Street, New York, NY

Information Session 2:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 3:00 p.m.

Information Session 6:00 p.m.
Public Statement Hearing 7:00 p.m.

Public comments will be accepted throughout the pendency of this proceeding, but parties are encouraged to comment on the low-income report at one of the public statement hearings or by other means described below. One hour before the public statement hearing, staff will provide an overview

of the report and will be available to answer questions. The report can be obtained from the Commission's website, www.dps.ny.gov, by entering case number 14-M-0565 in the search field on the homepage.

It is not necessary to be present at the start of the hearing, to make an appointment in advance, or to present written material to speak at the hearing. Persons will be called to speak after completing a request card. Each public statement hearing will continue until everyone wishing to speak has been heard or other reasonable arrangements have been made.

All persons attending the public statement hearing on October 13, 2015 in the New York City Office must show valid photo identification upon arrival at 90 Church Street. Disabled persons requiring special accommodations should call the DPS's Human Resources Management Office at (518) 474-2520 as soon as possible. TDD users may request a sign language interpreter by placing a call through the New York Relay Service at 711. Individuals with difficulty understanding or reading English are encouraged to call the Commission at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this notice.

Other Ways to Comment

Internet or Mail: In addition to speaking at the formal hearings, members of the public desiring to comment may submit written comments by sending them electronically to the Commission's Secretary at secretary@dps.ny.gov or by mail or delivery to Hon. Kathleen H. Burgess, Secretary, Public Service Commission, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223-1350. Comments should refer to Case 14-M-0565.

Toll-free Opinion Line: Comments may also be submitted through the Commission's Opinion Line at 1-800-335-2120. This number is designed to take comments about pending cases from in-state callers, 24 hours a day. Callers should press "1" to leave comments for the cases referenced above. These comments are not transcribed but are summarized, with the summary reported to the Consumer Advocate and the Commission.

Written comments may be accessed on the Commission's website by searching Case 14-M-0565 in the input box labeled "Search for Case Number" and clicking on the "Public Comments" tab. Many libraries offer free Internet access.

About Reforming the Energy Vision

Under Governor Cuomo's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV), New York State is spurring clean energy innovation and attracting new investment to build a cleaner, more resilient and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers. REV encompasses groundbreaking regulatory reform to integrate clean energy into the core of our power grid, redesigned programs and strategies to unlock private capital, and active leadership in deploying innovative energy solutions across the State's own public facilities and operations. REV will enable a dynamic, clean-energy economy operating at a scale that will stimulate opportunities for communities across the state to create jobs and drive local economic growth, while protecting our environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

Successful initiatives already launched as part of REV include NY Sun, NY Green Bank, NY Prize, K-Solar, and a commitment to improve energy affordability for low-income communities. To learn more about REV, please visit www.ny.gov/REV4NY.