GOVERNOR HOCHUL ANNOUNCES RICHARD BERKLEY TO JOIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE AS CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Long-Time Utility Consumer Advocate Brings Years of Consumer Protection Expertise to Help DPS Further Protect the Interest of Customers

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that Richard Berkley has been appointed by the New York State Department of Public Service as the state’s Consumer Advocate. Berkley has dedicated his career to advocate for utility consumers, including most recently as the Director of the Public Utility Law Project - the leading utility consumer watchdog group in New York.

"My administration is committed to recruiting the best and brightest to serve and advocate on behalf of New Yorkers," Governor Hochul said. "Richard Berkley has a long record of public service and consumer advocacy, and is uniquely qualified to protect the interests of New York's utility customers."

In this role, Mr. Berkley will lead the Department's Office of Consumer Services, and will advise the CEO of the Department on matters pertaining to consumer protection, customer complaints, consumer trends that require investigation, and affordability policy.

Rory M. Christian, CEO of the Department of Public Service, said, "The Department welcomes Mr. Berkley to join with us in implementing and developing nation-leading consumer protection policy. As we take bold steps to transition to a clean energy economy, we must remain focused on ensuring that essential energy utility services are affordable and that all consumers, including disadvantaged communities, are protected. Mr. Berkley's outstanding successes as a consumer advocate will help us achieve these important goals."

Richard Berkley, Outgoing Executive Director of the Public Utility Law Project of New York, said, "I thank Governor Hochul and Public Service Commission Chairman Rory Christian for this exceptional opportunity to join the vital consumer protection work of the Department of Public Service. After many years working closely with the Commission, DPS and the Governor's energy team on New York’s complex utility issues, I am pleased to rejoin State service as the Consumer Advocate and aid in the State's progress on its nation-leading decarbonization goals that balance climate responsibility and affordability for all."

The Consumer Advocate may make presentations to the State Public Service Commission (PSC) at its monthly meetings on findings, file regular reports to the Commission assessing the
affordability of utility services and provide policy recommendations. The Consumer Advocate will hold regular forums with consumers and stakeholders in the community and various industry sectors and make recommendations regarding the necessity of legislation if warranted.

The Office of Consumer Services is the agency's second largest office with nearly 20 percent of the workforce that represents consumer interests in all activities overseen by the Commission. The office takes and resolves consumer complaints and utilizes consumer input to develop consumer policy.

Notably, the office played a key role in developing the recently approved $367 million energy affordability policy designed to provide monthly discounts for income-eligible customers, and is leading the State’s disbursement of $250 million from the recently enacted Fiscal Year 2023 state budget to reduce consumer utility arrears.

Mr. Berkley has seven years of experience in energy, telecommunications and water cases and issues in his position at the Public Utility Law Project, as well as several years of engagement with New York's utility regulator in prior state government positions and as an attorney for the City of New York. As a result, he is well acquainted with the issues under the purview of the Consumer Advocate.

In addition to practicing before the Department and the PSC, Mr. Berkley has extensive legislative experience with the issues that concern the Department and PSC. He has worked as a telecommunications counsel for the City of New York, which gives him experience working with broadband, cable television and internet issues, and technology contracts. He has also previously worked as a law clerk for Wisconsin's Public Service Commission and provided research and litigation assistance for the electric, gas and water divisions, as well as research for the general counsel and commissioners.