



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 6852, An Act Concerning the
Affordability of Utilities**

Senator Needleman, Representative Steinberg, Ranking Members Fazio and Buckbee, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in support of House Bill 6852, An Act Concerning the Affordability of Utilities.

Everybody needs a safe and stable place to live, which builds prosperous communities. But especially since the beginning of the pandemic, the cost of everything—such as rent, food, and fuel—has skyrocketed. Families across the state are struggling to pay their bills and stay afloat. There are also clear racial disparities in utility services. Studies have found that Black people and other minorities are at a higher risk for disconnections, add-on utility fees, inefficient housing, and having to forego other necessities to pay for energy.¹ One analysis found that Black families earning less than 150 percent of the poverty level were twice as likely to have their electricity shut off when compared to white families with similar incomes.²

People in Connecticut cannot have a future here if they cannot afford a place to live. When housing and utilities become unaffordable, there are cascading effects—like displacement from beloved homes, neighborhoods, and schools. When working people can afford to pay their bills, they can take better care of their families. The ACLU-

¹ See, e.g., Kathiann M. Kowalski, *Racial Disparities Persist in Electric Service. Is “Willful Blindness” to Blame?*, ENERGY NEWS NETWORK (July 1, 2020), <https://energynews.us/2020/07/01/racial-disparities-persist-in-electric-service-is-willful-blindness-to-blame/>.

² *Id.*

CT supports legislation that addresses our utilities rate hike crisis, like House Bill 6582, and urges this Committee to do the same.