

2021-K746

Assembly Resolution No. 746

BY: M. of A. Cahill

COMMEMORATING the 40th Anniversary of the Public Utility Law Project of New York, Inc. (PULP), and observing the 40th Anniversary of the Home Energy Fair Practices Act

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Public Utility Law Project of New York, Inc. (PULP), and to observe the 40th Anniversary of the Home Energy Fair Practices Act; and

WHEREAS, PULP was incorporated on October 12, 1981, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is celebrating its 40th Anniversary beginning October 12, 2021, and ending October 12, 2022; and

WHEREAS, PULP was founded in the wake of the late 1970s oil crisis, several years before its incorporation, by a collaborative effort of the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York (LASNNY) and the Schenectady Community Action Agency to protect the rights of low- and fixed-income rural and urban utility consumers and work to avert or moderate the unreasonable utility rate-hikes caused by sharp increases in energy costs; and

WHEREAS, For 40 years, PULP has championed the rights of the low-income, seniors on fixed-incomes, and disabled utility consumers, and worked closely with elected officials, other civil and legal services firms and advocacy groups to assist rural and urban New Yorkers, communities of color, immigrants and the broad mosaic of New York State's vulnerable households; and

WHEREAS, PULP was instrumental in drafting the Home Energy Fair

Practices Act (HEFPA), and in advising former Senator Dale Volcker and former Assemblymember Oliver Koppell, the sponsors and negotiators of the historic consumer protection legislation, and in advocating for its passage by the New York State Senate and Assembly; and

WHEREAS, PULP advocated with Governor Hugh Carey for the enactment of HEFPA, New York's nationally significant energy consumers' bill of rights, which Governor Carey signed into law on October 19, 1981; and

WHEREAS, PULP's four decades of zealous and principled advocacy on behalf of New York's low-income and fixed-income utility consumers have resulted in the creation of a historic statewide residential energy bill discount program, New York's Universal Service and Lifeline discount telephone programs, stronger regulation of ESCOs, increasing focus by utilities upon consumer protection, and also sparked a movement for affordable water in New York; and

WHEREAS, PULP's enthusiastic intervention in major energy, telecommunications and water rate-cases lowered utilities' perennial bill increases, broadened consumer protections and triggered more consumer-friendly utility company policies protecting low- and fixed-income consumers and millions of other New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, PULP celebrates and supports the mosaic of diversity that is the State of New York by developing multi-lingual utility rights materials, and conducting "Know Your Rights" training for innumerable consumer, community and advocate groups; and

WHEREAS, PULP works closely with and has educated the State's legal services and legal aid providers, community-based organizations and elected officials' constituent relations staff in order to create better outcomes for utility company consumer crises and complaints; and

WHEREAS, PULP has provided continuing legal education to attorneys in the State Legislature and State agencies, and members of the Attorney General's office, to enhance their knowledge of utility consumer law, policy and emerging issues; and

WHEREAS, PULP has worked zealously to protect low- and fixed-income consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, and to create a solution to the massive utility debt crisis caused by COVID-19 that resulted in more than 1.3 million households owing energy utilities more than \$1.7 billion, and in unknown but equally huge water, telephone and internet services consumer debt that will otherwise affect low-income households for decades; and

WHEREAS, For decades, PULP has answered the call of the Legislature to provide expert advice to investigative hearings, special task forces and work groups investigating harmful utility issues such as: service outages, nuclear plant failures, overcharges and billing inaccuracies, environmental concerns, consumer protection needs and/or failures, the need for special consumer protections in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic collapse, and such other issues as are within the concern of the Legislature and local governmental subdivisions of the Great State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Public Utility Law Project of New York, Inc., and to observe the 40th Anniversary of the Home Energy Fair Practices Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Public Utility Law Project of New York, Inc.