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## NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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# Senate Majority Takes Action to Lower Utility Costs and Protect Ratepayers Across New York

(Albany, N.Y.) Today, the Senate Democratic Majority is advancing legislation to further protect ratepayers across New York State. This legislation continues the work of the Senate Majority to support working families and fight New York’s affordability crisis by prioritizing the interests of consumers and holding utility companies accountable.

This package of bills works to address the failures of utilities and power producers. This package includes legislation to establish affordable payment plan options for eligible utility customers; to protect utility customers from service terminations and late fees during Public Service Commission (PSC) investigations of a utility company; and to require the PSC to evaluate the economic implications of potential rate increase or change on utility customers.

**Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said, “New Yorkers are burdened with some of the highest utility rates in the country, often without clear explanations or transparency in how these rates are determined. This ongoing lack of accountability leaves consumers frustrated and struggling to manage escalating costs. This legislative package prioritizes affordability by introducing measures to curb the rising costs of utilities and expand flexible payment plan options, increases transparency for consumers, and modernizes outdated processes. I’d like to thank our bill sponsors for holding utility companies accountable, and ensuring families have the tools they need to manage their utility bills.”

**Chair of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee, Senator Kevin Parker** said, “It has and will be my focus to put the rate payers first, as we continue to build out a new generation. It’s always been important to me to make sure that the people of this great state get every possible opportunity to keep money in their pockets. The importance of building strong long-term sustainable infrastructure goes hand in hand with balancing the ability for every New Yorker to maintain their households in day-to-day life. It was my pleasure to start this legislative year off with a package of rate payer focused bills and through my Committee, I will continue to sponsor and move legislation that gets New York closer to reaching its goals.”

The legislation being passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Utility Hikes Economic Impact:** This bill, [S.1847](#), sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, would require the Public Service Commission to consider the economic impact of utility rates and charges when evaluating utilities' proposed rate changes.
- **The Consumer Utility Protections During Investigations (CUPDI) Act:** This bill, [S.904](#), sponsored by Senator Kristen Gonzalez, would protect utility customers from service terminations and overdue charges while the Public Service Commission (PSC) investigates a utility. In addition, it requires customers to be notified when an investigation is taking place.
- **Limiting Estimated Billing:** This bill, [S.2182](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, requires utility companies to perform actual meter readings rather than estimated bills to ensure ratepayers are only charged for what they owe.
- **Strengthen Utility Storm Response and Compliance:** This bill, [S.1701](#), sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer would incentivize better regulatory compliance by utilities through increased flexibility for the Public Service Commission to assess penalties on utilities for violations of the Public Service Law that relate to storm response and compliance, and to expand emergency response plan requirements.
- **Utilities to Adopt the Common Equity Ratio:** This bill, [S.1896](#), sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer would require electric corporations, gas corporations, steam corporations and water-works corporations to use standardized return on equity calculations set by the Public Service Commission to ensure a fair and reasonable standard.
- **Limits Fixed Charges:** This bill, [S.1329](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker, would direct the Department of Public Service to adjust each utility corporation's residential fixed charge upon such corporation's filing with the Department regarding rate schedule amendments, to recover only the fixed costs and operation and maintenance expenses directly related to metering, billing, service connections and the provision of customer service.
- **Establishing affordable payment plans for eligible utility customers:** This bill, [S.1330](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker, would require utility companies to establish a statewide program to provide individuals who participate in various social services programs with affordable payment plans.
- **Establishing minimum standards for payment plans for eligible utility customers:** This bill, [S.1327](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker, would require the Public Service Commission to set standards and eligibility requirements for affordable payment plans.
- **Home Energy Assistance Re-enrollment:** This bill, [S.1966](#), sponsored by Senator Chris Ryan, would require social services districts to automatically re-enroll eligible persons or households for the low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP) if they remain eligible.

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Leroy Comrie** said, “Utility rate hikes affect every household in New York, and we have a responsibility to ensure fairness in these decisions. My bill, S.1847, guarantees that the Public Service Commission considers how proposed rate changes impact our

communities. This is a necessary step to protect hard working New Yorkers and hold utility providers accountable and responsive to the economic conditions that affect us all.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Kristen Gonzalez** said, “As New Yorkers face a changing climate and correspondingly high utility rates, we must hold energy companies accountable for exorbitant and illegal rate increases, especially when these same companies are under investigation, so that every day New Yorkers can keep their lights and air on. I’m proud to be a part of a majority that prioritizes addressing our state’s affordability crisis.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Michelle Hinchey** said, “Utilities should be treated as a public service—not a shareholder service. Yet, from the Hudson Valley to Queens to Buffalo, utility companies continue to prioritize their bottom line over the needs of the people they’re meant to serve. I’m proud that my bill to ban estimated billing—a fight we’ve been carrying since 2021—is included in the Senate’s ratepayer protection package. No one should have to question whether they can trust their utility bill, and this commonsense legislation was designed to deliver the stability New Yorkers deserve by requiring actual—not estimated or inflated—meter readings. The Senate’s legislative package is an important step in our wider fight for change that will push utility companies serving the people of New York toward greater reliability, transparency, and cost-savings for ratepayers.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Shelley B. Mayer** said, “I am pleased that two of my bills passed the Senate today as part of the Utility Affordability Package. I hear from constituents daily regarding their utility bills, often showing bills that bear little resemblance to their actual usage, or that have the “regulated” part of their bill far exceeding the “market-driven” portion. My bill, S.1896, will prioritize New Yorkers’ right to have stable utility rates that are as low as possible by requiring the PSC to determine rates in a fairer, more transparent manner that puts the interest of ratepayers ahead of the for-profit utility company. My other bill, S.1701, will hold utility companies more accountable when they fail to prepare for and respond to storms. As many regions of our state endure more frequent and intense storms, utility companies must step up and invest ahead of increasingly common adverse weather incidents. I thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and my colleagues for prioritizing the crisis of unaffordable utility rates.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Chris Ryan** said, “HEAP is a lifeline for the most vulnerable New Yorkers and for working families who are forced to struggle against rising energy costs. It is our job as Legislators to help address our constituents’ needs as best we can. During the freezing winter months, every New Yorker deserves to be warm at home.”

**Maria Alvarez, Executive Director NY StateWide Senior Action Council** said, “We applaud the NYS Senate for passing a comprehensive set of bills that will help New York’s senior citizens and their families to contain utility costs in an environment where their fixed incomes are not keeping pace with the cost of living. We have long advocated for the ability of older New Yorkers to be able to age in place. These measures will help achieve that goal.”

**Laurie Wheelock, Executive Director of PULP** said, “PULP thanks the Senate Majority for advancing this robust package of legislation designed to protect utility customers. As many

households continue to struggle to afford vital utility services, the Senate’s leadership on affordability and consumer protection is more critical than ever. We commend their focus on reducing costs, improving transparency, and ensuring that vulnerable households are not left behind during the coldest days of winter.”

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