

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



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July 27, 2022

Mr. Charles A. Freni, Jr.  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation  
284 South Ave  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Re: Reintroduction of Late Payment Charges

Dear President Freni:

I am writing to you with regards to Central Hudson's announced plan to re-introduce late payment charges, which is anticipated to resume in October of this year. While I appreciate that Central Hudson voluntarily suspended the collection of late fees, as well as service terminations for non-payment, in March of 2020 in light of the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shutdown had on customers, I am concerned that out of control inflation—particularly with respect to basic necessities such as utilities—in addition to on-going confusion and inaccuracies resulting from Central Hudson's new billing system, this could not be coming at a worse time. Respectfully, I ask that you suspend these plans to re-introduce late payment charges, and only re-visit the matter once billing issues have been entirely resolved for all customers.

This past year, we have seen some of the highest surges in utility prices in recent memory. I have heard from countless residents of the 41<sup>st</sup> Senate District that their utility bills were regularly double what they were used to, and there were even reports of price spikes as high as 300%. Although there are many factors that contributed to these striking price surges, including misguided policies advanced at both the State and Federal level, as a provider of these basic necessities it is critical that we work together to ensure New Yorkers can afford their utilities.

In February, Central Hudson warned of increased supply prices for electricity and natural gas "as the region navigates a colder than average winter," among other factors. Now, we have just seen a sweltering heat wave sweep the Northeast, with a record-breaking five-day streak of 100 °F or more in nearby Newark, NJ. Many New Yorkers have fallen behind as a result of the economic shutdown in response to COVID, and their situations were exacerbated by increased energy costs this past winter, and the challenges have only accumulated since then as we are in the midst of record levels of inflation. I fear many New Yorkers who are

currently behind, or in jeopardy of falling behind, in their payments may not see the financial relief they need before late payments resume this fall, which will only compound their struggles.

Given the numerous outside factors that make now such a difficult and precarious time for New Yorkers financially, and especially given Central Hudson's own challenges in ensuring customers have reliable, accurate bills, it is my hope that you will reconsider this proposal and suspend any plans to resume re-introducing lay payment charges this fall.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to working with you on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Serino".

Senator Sue Serino  
41<sup>st</sup> District

Cc: Rory M. Christian, Chair and CEO, New York State Public Service Commission