



## ATTORNEY GENERAL JOSH STEIN

March 26, 2020

Via Electronic Mail

### **RE: Need to Provide Utility Service During State of Emergency**

The spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the associated and escalating public health and safety crisis are matters of significant concern. During these unprecedented and unsettling times, it is vitally important that North Carolinians maintain their utility service. While many North Carolinians are staying at home to slow the spread of the virus, disconnection of utility service has especially significant health and safety effects. People who are struggling with their health, have been laid off from a job, or have otherwise experienced hardship as a result of this crisis, should not lose access to the water, power, or gas they need.

Last week, I told the public that I would be asking the North Carolina Utilities Commission to compel all public utilities to suspend disconnection of utility services as a remedy for nonpayment of charges and to suspend late fees. Before I even submitted a petition, the Utilities Commission took the quick and commendable action of entering an order doing just that, on its own accord. The order is attached to this letter and you can also find it here: <https://starw1.ncuc.net/NCUC/ViewFile.aspx?Id=99807398-6abd-412f-b94c-6c23eb2427b0>.

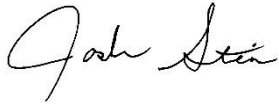
I am now asking you, as municipal and local utilities that provide water, power, gas, or other vital services to your residents, to pledge the following during this state of emergency:

- not to disconnect your residents from utility services, and
- to suspend late fees for nonpayment of utility service.

Taking these actions will greatly assist your constituents during this difficult time period. Further, it will match the actions that larger utilities in this state are taking as required by the Utilities Commission order.

I know that a number of municipal and local utilities have already taken these steps. For those of you that have, please know how grateful I am for your leadership.

Please contact Assistant Attorney General, Peggy Force, of our office at [pforce@ncdoj.gov](mailto:pforce@ncdoj.gov) to let us know whether you have taken these basic, common-sense measures to help your customers and constituents. We look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Stein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Josh" and last name "Stein" clearly distinguishable.

Joshua H. Stein  
Attorney General

cc: North Carolina Association of County Commissioners  
North Carolina League of Municipalities