

National Consumer Law Center Attorney Testifies at Jan. 14 Hearing on Massachusetts Competitive Energy Supply Bills

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More than 50 Groups, Individuals Urge MA DPU to Investigate Unfair and Deceptive Practices of Competitive Suppliers that Harm Massachusetts Families

Boston – On Tuesday, January 14, 2020, **National Consumer Law Center attorney Jenifer Bosco testified at a hearing** between 1pm and 5pm **before the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy** that will include several bills on competitive energy suppliers (CES) for residential customers. In her testimony, Bosco supported H.2823 (Chan) and oppose H.2818 (Cahill) and S.1978 and S.1979 (Humason). Representatives from the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (MA AGO) also testified, including Deputy Division Chief Nathan Forster of the Energy and Telecommunications Division. Deregulation of electricity sales in Massachusetts has led to a “wild west” for competitive energy supply (CES) companies who pressure residential customers to sign up for unfair and expensive electricity contracts, and both the Mass AGO and the MA DPU have received thousands of complaints from residential customers about the aggressive telemarketing tactics of some of the CES companies.

Last Friday (January 10), more than 50 Massachusetts nonprofit organizations and individuals, including NCLC, Greater Boston Legal Services, community action programs, elder care providers, and social service agencies, sent a letter to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to “strongly support” the request of the Massachusetts AGO for the DPU to promptly and thoroughly investigate the effect of residential CES on Massachusetts families. The advocates also urged the DPU to rein in abusive competitive supply practices in the Bay State, especially as they target low-income and vulnerable communities, including the elderly and those with limited English proficiency.

NCLC has written extensively about problems with residential competitive energy suppliers in Massachusetts. In 2019, it was one of several advocacy groups that submitted comments to the DPU Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) urging it to more closely oversee and regulate the market. To date, the DPU has done little to strengthen consumer protections.

Bosco's testimony is available at <http://bit.ly/bosco-testimony>. Related resources, including NCLC's 2018 report and follow-up issue brief on problems with residential CES in Massachusetts, and other materials at:

<https://nclc-old.ogosenet.net/issues/energy-utilities-a-communications/electric-and-gas.html>.