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STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

January 27, 2026

Honorable Angelo Santabarbara
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building Room 502
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblyman Santabarbara:

Thank you for your letter raising concerns about rising winter utility bills and the impact of delivery charges on ratepayers across upstate New York. I share your concerns and understand why so many New Yorkers are frustrated and upset by these higher energy costs, particularly during the winter months when heating their homes is not optional.

The Comptroller's Office does not have the legal authority or ability to lower utility rates or consumers' utility bills or change the rate-setting process, and we are not authorized to perform the regulatory and oversight functions of the Public Service Commission (PSC) or the consumer protection functions of the Utility Intervention Unit (UIU) within the Department of State. Under state law, the PSC leads the quasi-judicial utility rate-setting process and approves increases to the utilities' delivery charges. The PSC is also required by law to regulate and audit investor-owned utilities' performance and enforce consumer protections. The UIU is required by law to represent the interests of New York's consumers in the regulation of energy services and participate in any proceedings before the PSC on their behalf.

The websites of both the [Department of Public Service](#) and the [UIU](#) provide an overview of the rate case process, which helps explain how delivery charges are calculated and justified. However, for specific details regarding National Grid's delivery charges, I encourage you to share your letter with the PSC and the UIU and request from them detailed answers using data and information from the rate cases themselves.

How rising delivery costs relate to utility profits and cost recovery practices is complex and varies by utility, and merits close scrutiny. Both the PSC and the UIU possess the statutory authority, expertise, and data necessary to perform this analysis and address your questions. The [independent audits](#) the PSC is required by law to perform of each investor-owned utility include data that may also assist you. Last year, the PSC engaged independent auditor NorthStar Consulting Group, Inc. to conduct a comprehensive management and operations audit of National Grid which is currently in process. Moreover, it is incumbent upon both the UIU and the PSC to determine if regulatory incentive mechanisms insulate utilities from risk at the expense of consumers.

Despite statutory and regulatory oversight mechanisms to provide accountability and transparency for ratepayers by both the PSC and the UIU, utility bills are a serious affordability problem in New York, with many residents paying among the highest rates in the nation. Our audits and reports have shown utility costs have long been a problem for consumers, and are a factor in the state's affordability crisis.

Our work has consistently identified a critical need for greater transparency and more focus on lowering energy costs for New York's consumers and businesses. For example, our audit of the [PSC's enforcement of commission orders](#) found that the agency failed to sufficiently monitor utilities'

compliance, was not effectively holding utilities accountable, was not applying monetary penalties and other sanctions as appropriate, and was not verifying utility data, which in some cases was inaccurate. Our audit of the [PSC's progress](#) in achieving the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act found that inadequate planning, analysis and transparency, particularly regarding cost impacts on ratepayers, was putting at risk both public support for the Act and timely achievement of its laudable goals.

Our report on the [Clean Energy Fund](#) urged redirection of resources to initiatives that would most cost-effectively advance the clean energy market and lower the financial burden on utility customers. We also found that the [costs of incentivizing new renewable electricity](#) were being borne almost exclusively by New York's utility consumers, and called for greater effort to minimize the impact on ratepayers.

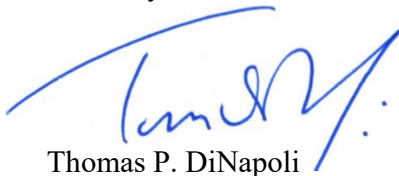
During the pandemic, more than [1.2 million customers](#) had fallen behind on their utility bills. Since then, despite [federal](#) and state aid and the establishment of new state programs, the number of customers more than 60 days in arrears has still not returned [to pre-pandemic levels](#). My Office has an audit of the PSC's oversight of its energy affordability program in progress, and I look forward to sharing the results of that audit when it is completed.

The current regulatory structure is not adequately protecting our residents. Also, as noted, the UIU is charged with representing the interests of New York's consumers in utility regulations, but its activities appear limited. You and your colleagues in the Legislature have the power to change the laws that define the regulatory structure and protect consumers. While my Office will continue doing the work it can under our existing authority, I welcome discussion of changes to state law that would enhance the role of the Comptroller's Office in protecting New York's utility customers.

Also, Governor Hochul's FY 2027 Executive Budget includes several proposals aimed at addressing the utility cost crisis. This includes reforms to the Public Service Law and other statutory changes with the stated intent to provide the state with greater ability to protect consumers, tie executive compensation to affordability, and facilitate better access to the state's energy affordability and assistance programs. I urge the Legislature to work with the Governor to enact necessary reform measures that will reduce the utility cost burden on New Yorkers, improve transparency and accountability, and better protect consumers.

I appreciate your advocacy on behalf of your constituents and share the goal of providing real rate relief for our residents. New York State's legislative committees have historically utilized their investigative and legislative powers to scrutinize rising utility rates, which could also inform the statutory changes needed to lower consumers' bills and reform the rate setting process. I welcome continued collaboration as you consider the legislative changes needed to deliver meaningful utility cost relief for New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Thomas P. DiNapoli
State Comptroller