



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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July 23, 2019

John McAvoy  
Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Consolidated Edison of New York, Inc.  
4 Irving Place,  
New York, NY 10003

Dear Mr. McAvoy:

As I stated in my July 19, 2019 letter, my staff at the Office of the Public Advocate have been closely monitoring the blackouts that have impacted hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers over the past week. In addition to the concerns I expressed in the previous letter, I have some additional inquiries related to the most recent blackouts, especially the intentional power cut that took out power to 30,000 rate payers in southeast Brooklyn.

A press release issued by your organization at 11PM on Sunday, July 21, 2019 stated that the southeastern blackout was caused intentionally as part of a pre-emptive move to protect vital equipment. However, a press release dated two and a half hours earlier announcing the outage makes no reference to the intentional nature of the blackout. This raises a number of questions:

- When there is a need to make an emergency power cut, how is the decision made? How long ahead of such cuts are these decisions finalized? Who has to approve of these decisions?
- Knowing in advance that the grid would hit high demands due to the heat, what was done in advance to prevent and/or prepare for this power outage? Why was the public not made aware of this disruption of service until hours later? Is it standard practice to not warn communities ahead of such cuts? Is there a communications structure in place to inform customers?
- When these decisions are made, what considerations or aid are offered to those impacted? Is there any pre-emptive outreach to senior housing or other communities with low mobilization to mitigate the increased risk these communities face in a blackout during a heatwave? Does your organization offer any outreach or aid to assist those whom are dependent on electric medical equipment such as breathing machines?
- I understand Con Edison dispatched a team of 4000 electric operations personnel this past weekend in anticipation of issues related to the heat wave. Is Con Edison utilizing employees or outside contractors to provide these support services?
- If your company is utilizing outside contractors, what process determines the experience and training of staff at these firms? What quality control does your organization perform to enforce such standards?
- The peak demand last night was more than 10,000 Megawatts short of the peak demand Con Edison has claimed the system is designed to withstand. Why was the



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affected equipment from the blackouts considered vitally at risk at a significantly lower level of demand? Is the actual peak demand your system can handle lower than the 13,300 Megawatts you have publicly claimed?

I know that your company is still working on investigating all of the blackouts from the past week. While I look forward to hearing the results of that investigation, I am concerned that preparations for any heatwaves may not be as adequate as necessary, and that many of our cities most vulnerable residents will pay the price. I know your organization is aware of how vital the resiliency and continuous operation of the grid is to the daily lives of all New Yorkers.

I look forward to your expeditious response. For further discussion, please contact First Deputy Public Advocate for Policy Nick E. Smith, at [nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov](mailto:nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov), if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Williams".

Jumaane D. Williams  
Public Advocate for the City of New York