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Testimony of Senator Shelley Mayer (37th SD - Westchester) Submitted to the Public Service Commission's Public Statement Hearing Concerning Consolidated Edison's Proposed Electric and Gas Rate Increase

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Shelley Mayer and I am the New York State Senator for the 37th District representing cities from Yonkers to Rye, as well as towns from Bedford to Eastchester, and villages from Port Chester to Bronxville.

I serve as the Chair of the State Senate's Committee on Education as well as being a member of the Committees on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions. I also serve as Deputy Majority Leader for Senate-Assembly Relations.

I am here today to testify on behalf of the constituents I represent and in opposition to Con Edison's proposed rate hike.

Con Edison's proposed rate case is looking to raise electricity and gas rates by a total of \$695 million from its customers. They estimate that such an increase will result in a 5.7% increase on the average residential total electric bill or a \$6.10 monthly increase on a \$107.94 bill in Westchester. Gas customers will experience a 10.9% increase on their total bill or \$17.28 on a \$159.06 bill. On an annualized basis, customers will face an over \$200 a year increase in gas service alone.

For many Westchester residents, these increases pose serious challenges, particularly for older residents living on fixed incomes, and struggling to afford high property taxes and a lack of affordable housing. In my district, 17% of my constituents are age 65 and over, 30% earn \$50,000 a year or less and 30% spend more than 50% of their income on housing expenses. When you drill down to the individual people I represent, this proposed increase to their monthly utility bill will pose serious financial challenges to meeting fixed expenses. I believe that a rate increase of this magnitude will have significant impact on their ability to make ends meet.

In addition, this substantial rate increase request is particularly troubling in light of Con Ed's persistently poor record of restorations after storms and the most recent moratorium announcement. From Superstorm Sandy to Con Ed's most recent failure to quickly restore electric service after the March 2018 Nor'easters and the Company's announcement of an ongoing moratorium on all new uninterruptible gas connections, I believe Con Edison's consumers deserve better – both in terms of responsiveness and rate-setting.

The gas moratorium, which is already having major effects on my district, is a major, troubling factor that cannot be ignored in this rate case. I have heard from residents and businesses who worry that their projects cannot move forward because they will not be able to connect to the Company's gas system. Such projects include efforts to build much-needed affordable housing units and support small business growth. While I appreciate that the Company is making

proposals to mitigate the moratorium, and that the Governor has mobilized NYSERDA and NYPA to invest in solutions for the Westchester moratorium, I urge the Public Service Commission to be sensitive to the costs being shouldered by residential customers, especially seniors, people with disabilities, families, as well as small businesses, especially in the context of limited new gas service.

In addition, it is perplexing to me that the increase in the flat monthly customer service charge ironically penalizes those who try to conserve and reduce usage – an effort that we strongly support.

The hearing on this application demonstrates how important it was that we created a new State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate, which the legislature passed this year. As a co-sponsor, and as a strong advocate for consumers, this application makes it clear that we need more independent, consumer-focused voices in this debate. I am optimistic that the Governor will sign this bill, which passed the Senate and Assembly. In future hearings, I look forward to hearing their perspective on rate increase requests.

In conclusion, I urge that the PSC reject this request to increased fixed monthly customer charges for electricity and gas, and to sharply reduce the requested increase in delivery charges.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on behalf of the residents of my district.

June 25, 2019