

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2020

CONTACT:

Courtney Naquin, courtney.naquin@sierraclub.org, (409)779-7949

Chrissy Mann, chrissy.mann@sierraclub.org, (512) 413-8346

View as webpage

Sierra Club Applauds Public Utility Commission of Texas Actions to Suspend Water and Residential Electric Disconnections

Austin, Texas- Earlier today, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas voted unanimously to issue a state-wide, temporary moratorium on disconnects of electric, water and wastewater service for failure to pay. For eligible residential customers in the competitive electric market in Texas (where you have choice in your electric provider), the PUC created a new COVID-19 Electricity Relief Program, which will be the mechanism to protect low income customers in the competitive market from disconnections.

This is welcome news for Texans that are currently struggling or will begin struggling to make ends meet in the face of unprecedented unemployment and related economic impacts. Low-income communities and communities of color pay the highest proportion of their incomes for energy and they are most vulnerable to disconnection. This measure is a good step toward protecting our most vulnerable populations, including those who are sick, disabled or elderly.

Texans will face unknown economic and public health challenges in the coming months, especially as hot weather and the hurricane season approach. While today's actions are an important first step, Sierra Club and other allies will be following the evolving situation and will continue to advocate for necessary protections in the implementation of these programs at the PUC.

In response to today's decisions made by the Public Utility Commission, Misti O'Quinn, Organizing Representative, released the following statement:

"The impact of the current pandemic has hit really close to home for me. I am not the only one with friends and family that have been put in a place of financial uncertainty as a result. Texas residents require and deserve access to utilities regardless of their ability to pay during the COVID-19 emergency. We need the adequate safety-nets to ensure that all Texans are secure and feel as though they can rely on state agencies to assist them during this crisis."

###

About the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.