

Unedited Captioning Transcript of Equity, Community Affairs, Housing, Health and Education Meeting - February 8, 2023

Okay, the regular community affairs house and health education and equity committee meeting of February 8th 2023 will come to order.

Madam clerk, can you please read the meeting? Notice?

This meeting is being held pursuant to Kara 61.806 in council rule 5, a red.

Happy middle clerk. I am the chair council 1 Barbara Shanklin and the vice chair is councilman Stu advances.

With me virtually is.

Cancel memory Parker, councilman, Tammy hawkers, um, Madam chair or is there any names or anyone in the participate in the chambers?

In a council person? Yes, so we have committee members signed committee member Rui committee member, Owens committee member, Arthur and vice chair Benson.

Okay, thank you. And the clerk will you read number 1? Please item number 1.

I am number 1 is our dash 8 dash 23 a resolution and supportive Kentucky general assembly House bill 66 to.

Requirements to prevent utility disconnection and vulnerable households red.

Thank you and I have a motion in a 2nd.

We have a motion.

Okay, thank you. Item has been properly moved in a 2nd.

Uh, counsel, author, you have guests.

Yes, ma'am. Thank you so much. So I briefly introduced the resolution and then pass the Mike to our guest doctor representative Lisa Willner to speak about this. Okay, thank you.

Thank you so, I'm sure of plenty of our council members have been hit up about the hikes and utility bills.

This is something that's impacting Kentuckians also impacted Americans in general. So this resolution is in support.

Of something to help curb that to make sure that people who are their most vulnerable from our elderly citizens to our young people to our people who are disabled.

Are not getting their utility shut off of the coldest months and the hardest of the hardest months.

I want to thank representative Lisa will know for introducing this.

And hopefully, as soon as the largest city in this commonwealth, we can stand with her.

To make sure we're protecting our vulnerable Kentuckians. So, with that being said, I'll pass it over to representative.

Thank you, thank you Lisa for being here at 1 time. You were my representative in new bird area and I appreciate.

Thank you so much chairwoman. It's great to see you again and thank you to councilman Arthur for bringing forward this resolution and supportive hospitals 66. I'm just gonna say it's a, it's a human services issue.

It's also a socioeconomic issue. It's a mental health issue. This we have a vested interest in making sure that our people can be in secure housing. And that includes. Includes

Protections against, having the utility utilities shut off and since I could not be there in person today, all of the social work organizations in Kentucky are in support of this resolution.

And there are a couple of them there in the chamber. And if you could indulge them to speak for a few minutes on this, that would be wonderful.

Yeah, we will. Thank Thank you. Thank you. So your next case customer. Thank you for being here and just make sure you introduce your name your organization for the record. All right. Good afternoon. My name is Dr and I am here to show my support for House bill, 66.

As a retired service region administrator of 25 years from the cabinet for health and family services in the department for community based services.

I am currently a social work educator and I am honored to be here today to speak very briefly on a critically important issue. issue

Hospitals 66 suggests winter and summer temperature standards for disconnection of service.

By retail, electric and gas utilities.

It allows resumption of disconnection only after a 72 hour period during which the temperature standard is exceeded.

Natural disasters in Kentucky over the past 18 months, have shown us how vulnerable we all are to the loss of precious utility services to function and survive.

Each day we have tireless social service workers who effectively guide low income deserving people to benefits that allow them to keep their gas and lights on in the cold temperatures.

During the pandemic, and during the hot summers that soon will be approaching.

They'll shut us are the most severe form of punishing the poor struggling individuals and families also suffer the impact.

Of utility debt accumulation the step before disconnection outages, limit, purchasing power and they hurt credit scores. They prevent people from obtaining home loans and good jobs.

Prior studies have suggested that utility shutoffs can be extremely disruptive to families.

Loss of energy services, such as lighting, heating cooling and food preservation can have severe negative impacts on the finances the health and the safety of our vulnerable families here in the city of Louisville.

Prior studies in other states have demonstrated that children in households facing utility, shut off. They have had a higher likelihood of poor health.

And developed mental delays and hospitalization.

From the devastating impact.

On our youngest citizens to the alarming concern for those whose life depends on the electricity.

For oxygen, 24 hour care provided by loved ones and safety for staff. And family members, administering comfort measures and medications equipment for our chronic.

Terminally ill Kentuckians for whom disconnection can result in increased pain.

Re, hospitalization and death.

The preventable practice of disconnections it keeps millions of Americans in poverty and narrows the avenues of escape.

Our government and regulators must come confront this system that shackles our families to a lifetime of debt.

While blocking access to other energy solutions.

At this time I will turn it over to Brenda Rosen.

Thank you. Good afternoon.

I'm Brenda Rosen, the executive director of the National Association of social workers, Kentucky, chapter 155 chapters of the largest social work association in the world, and I am here on behalf of all of the

associations that do the good work day in and day out for social workers and for our most vulnerable communities in my 40 years, I can definitely testify to watching thousands of people die.

That includes children and people of all ages, and I have had to, in my own experience through those many years, worked with utility companies to be able to provide emergency service for our most vulnerable people with chronic and terminal illnesses

And just on behalf of the most important things that we're seeing right now we're seeing mental health anxiety and depression, and anxiety with our most vulnerable like children. So, this bill.

It's an opportunity for everyone to work across party lines and do what is best for our constituents and for our most vulnerable citizens. So I thank you so much. And on behalf we are just honored to be here for rep. Dr, Lisa Willner, who is the only licensed mental health professional in the general assembly? And I think this is an opportunity for everybody to come together, want to support our communities want to support our utility companies.

We want to work together to be able to keep people. Safe we've lived through a lot these past couple of years with natural disasters with covid and we're looking forward to some good things happening with this bill and we are honored and grateful to be here today. Thank you so much.

Thank you.

Thank you so much. I appreciate it. A councilman Arthur.

I'll just add for the record that L. G. in need currently does have an internal policy when it's freezing. They have a 24 hour period where they will halt shut offs. So we're talking 32 degrees or below.

But when you look at the opposite, when it's hot, they're looking at 98 degrees.

So House bill 6,695 degrees, which is a lot more appropriate for the human body when we're talking about the heat index, it also calls on a 72 hour period, as opposed to a. two hour period as opposed to a 24 hour, period, so a lot more protections for vulnerable Kentuckians when we pass House bill 66 Thank you. Thank you.

Does anyone have any questions or concerns that they would like to ask or guest?

Okay, questions are concerned.

I don't see anybody vice chair Benson would like to speak. Okay.

Thank you, man that came in. I'm in the corner here.

Okay, kind of had, uh.

How do we how do we know.

What's up? Somebody else? Who's who's.

Vulnerable, I mean, the churches know it or does the government do we know who all the people who are vulnerable?

That did, somebody can look out for before the situation comes it.

But they get utilities shut off.

Can anyone answer his question?

Yes, anytime you have people who are in those vulnerable situations, vulnerable families that are in poverty, those individuals would have a social worker, or a social service specialist that's already attached to that household.

So they would know when that situation comes up as far as individuals are medically vulnerable you've got people who come into their homes home healthcare that monitors them as well as their doctors.

So, there is a middle person. So to speak that.

It has a pulse on all of those families that we're talking about, that someone is involved in their lives.

Does that answer your question? Sir Janet but is there anybody who might not be on social services that would come under a situation? That that is always possible?

I mean, I'm just looking at what kind of network do we have that we can that a person.

I mean, 1 reason I ran for office. Mm. Hmm. Thank you. Come downtown and you talk to people.

Do they really want to help you? I question it a lot. And so to me, we tried to help people navigate government and so that we can help people who don't know what to do.

And now they're in a band and some people aren't forceful enough.

They're too prideful to ask for some help or something and, you know, a lot of times churches and different people know who's struggling and that's another net to help out.

Uh, but, you know, um, and.

I know that this might sound stupid, you know, L. G and E.

They're in to make money and you say, okay, well, you are going to pay this.

Well, somebody, I mean, they had to be soluble too. I mean, my daughter had a flying school, overwhelming field and 1 of the things she wanted to do, she want to let young girls fly free I said, you can't do that.

It's nice, but you can't pay the bills. You can't learn fly free.

And so somewhere along to make to make the bills that you got to pay.

Is is a company for profit.

Who picks up the bill do we pick up is that 1 of the things we are supposed to do we're supposed to figure out how much sure we are we put it in the budget and say we're paying for all the people who, I mean, I don't know, this is questions when you make the resolution sounds is good, because it's not binding. It's just saying, hey, we're thinking about trying to make sure.

That we don't leave somebody in a position.

That they may be die or hurt and so we look at all the avenues to make sure.

We don't let something behind and and so I like to figure out ways to make things work and there's always people when they know there's a problem.

And my family and the church I go to when they find that there's a problem.

They try to help solve it and that's what you're looking for. Help people help solve the problem. And so I was just kind of seeing how the, how we're thinking and I guess they'll work it out. Maybe in Frankfurt.

If they say, hey, we want you all to look at this and see what you can come up with to help out.

And then this is the 1st step. Yeah. And so that we can fine tune it as we go and find out where we're messing up and where we need to get some help.

Right and and we really appreciate this question because the reality is we have physicians, we have health care providers as Rene pointed out social workers and social services, churches, families of faith, community, action groups, targeted case managers and case managers.

Ministries and, yes, I think that there is, if we're looking at vulnerable clients, how do we, how do we handle it respectfully, because people are very proud, and we're seeing that right now in our Eastern or western parts of the country, and the aftermath of the natural disasters, so it's an opportunity for us to really highlight and educate because education is the key to engaging and educating, empowering our citizens, especially our vulnerable citizens.

Well, I appreciate it. Nobody knows better about problems than the person who's involved in the problems. Absolutely. Healing place. Do they know how to help people? Yes, they do. And sometimes getting the government out of the way, and let the people who know what's going on.

Do do the work 1 of the problems. I have a little bit with government.

Maybe like, I guess they try to run the other people's lives without knowing the whole problem.

Let's look for the solution and there's a lot of people who want to throw their chest out and, like, they're really somebody smart.

Things get solved when everybody kind of works together to solve the problem and you have to listen a little bit.

And sometimes people don't want to do that here. May I respond to the question?

Yes, thank you so much. I just wanted to note that this resolution does not make any financial commitments going forward for people who might have overdue bills. I also want to point out how hospitals, 66.

Does at protections and some clarity around payment plan. So we are encouraging people to make payment plans, put down a down payment, but also want to point out in the whereas clauses. You can see in Kentucky less than a quarter of the people who are eligible for utility assistants, actually receive it. So what we're hoping to do passing this resolution supporting house.

Bill, 66 is say, for everyone who doesn't get that government assistance that actually needs it.

We're going to make sure that we're not shutting off your utilities in a moment of crisis during a snowstorm of some sort or maybe when the heat index outside is 95 and so I just want to be clear there are no financial commitments.

We currently don't take care of everyone who does need that extra help that financial help. We cannot literally just according to our budget numbers, but that 3 quarters of consultants who are still eligible, we want to make sure they're not left behind in the code. code

Heat Thank you so much.

Thank you sir council cancel my aunt.

So, I'm not an expert on this by any means, but I do think it's important to remind everyone that is there to make money. However, they are a public utility.

And that is governed by the public utilities commission, and there's a lot of layers to that and they're guaranteed a monopoly.

As a public utility, so this is not your typical, you know.

Private for profit company I just want to again. I don't.

I don't I'm not an expert in how they're structured and all of that, but I do think it's important to remember that they are a public utility that is there to serve and to provide energy to to the public. And so I think it's important to remember that.

Thank you do we have anyone else this.

Up to speed, uh, did you want to speak.

Okay, thank you because, I mean, he said, you weren't in a queue.

Uh, there's no 1 else want me to speak.

Uh, then we need to go ahead and.

This is a resolution allowed for a voice vote.

All those in favor, signify by saying that.

Hi, hi. Any opposed?

Here in LA, this item will be sent to the present calendar, so we will be sending it to the consent calendar.

And we had no other business on.

In this committee, so with that objection, this committee is adjourned.

Thank you everyone for coming.

Thank you.