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**STATE OF VERMONT  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Docket No. 20-0703-PET

Vermont Legal Aid Request for Moratorium on        )  
Utility and Telecommunications Shutoffs During    )  
State of Emergency    )

**COMMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

The Governor has announced that the State of Emergency related to COVID-19 will expire at midnight, June 15, 2021. Governor Scott has also announced the lifting of all pandemic related restrictions in Vermont. For these reasons and those stated below, the Department recommends that the temporary halt of involuntary utility disconnections (“temporary moratorium”) expire at the end of this month as currently anticipated by the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) order of May 24, 2021.

The utilities have filed responses outlining various plans for resumption of disconnection procedures. The utilities are united in the belief that the temporary moratorium should expire such that the utilities can engage in dialog and assistance with customers in an effort to establish repayment plans and to apply for available assistance to reduce the arrearages for the customers.

There has been \$12 million made available for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program for Utility Assistance and \$15 million made available for the Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program. Both of these programs face deadlines for monies to be expended and the Department maintains that it is important that customers receive help with applying for assistance from these programs. Such assistance will be enhanced by the utilities being able to engage with their customers when the temporary moratorium is lifted.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont this 15<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021.

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

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