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NJBPU Strengthens Rules to Protect Residents Who Use Life-Saving Medical Equipment at Home

Trenton, N.J.—The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) approved a rule proposal that would increase protections for residents who rely on utility service for life-sustaining medical equipment in their homes.

The proposed amendments, which are designed to prevent service shutoffs for any residence that has provided proper verification that a customer is using medical equipment, provide additional safeguards to those already mandated by Linda’s Law. Governor Phil Murphy signed Linda’s Law on July 5, 2018 in response to the death of Newark resident Linda Daniels following a utility service shutoff.

“The death of Linda Daniels was a tragedy and this is a commonsense way to protect the health and safety of New Jersey utility customers,” said NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso. “The proposed amendments will take a strong law even further, bolstering measures already put in place to protect residents who rely on life-sustaining medical equipment.”

The amendments that the Board proposed will:

- Increase the period of time before service can be discontinued for nonpayment from 60 days to 90 days;
- Require utilities to determine whether life-sustaining equipment is present at the customer’s residence at least quarterly;
- Broaden the scope of medical professionals who can provide a statement verifying that the loss of electricity would aggravate the customer’s condition;

- Broaden the requirements for restoring service when an unknown account or master metered account is disconnected;
- Require utilities to develop outreach plans, to be distributed to customers quarterly, that educate the public and customers on the procedures and guidelines to qualify and apply for medical certification status.

The proposed rule amendments will be published in the New Jersey Register and be subject to a sixty-day public comment period.

About the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU)

NJBPU is a state agency and regulatory authority mandated to ensure safe, adequate and proper utility services at reasonable rates for New Jersey customers. Critical services regulated by NJBPU include natural gas, electricity, water, wastewater, telecommunications and cable television. The Board has general oversight and responsibility for monitoring utility service, responding to consumer complaints, and investigating utility accidents. To find out more about NJBPU, visit our web site at www.nj.gov/bpu.

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