

Eversource's Price Hikes Hurt Massachusetts Families—Real Relief Must Go Further

By Johnnie R. McKnight

Governor Maura Healey's recent announcement of a \$50 credit on electric bills is a welcome step in addressing the burden of rising utility costs in Massachusetts. Her administration's broader plan to tackle affordability, eliminate unnecessary charges, and expand discount programs is an important initiative that acknowledges the struggles many families have faced. However, for those who endured the harshest months of winter choosing between heating their homes and putting food on the table, this relief comes too late and falls far short of what's needed.

Throughout the winter, countless families, seniors, and working individuals living paycheck to paycheck were hit with astronomical utility bills that doubled or even tripled overnight. Social media was flooded with stories of residents panicking over how they would cover bills that suddenly spiked to \$600, \$800, or even over \$1,000 in a single month. Some went without heat altogether, bundled in layers of clothing inside their own homes, just to avoid the financial hit. Elderly couples on fixed incomes rationed their heating to unsafe levels, worried they would not be able to afford their medication if they kept the thermostat too high. Parents skipped meals to ensure their children stayed warm, while others drained their savings or took on additional debt just to keep the lights on.

These were not small increases—they were life-altering financial burdens. And while the state's action now is commendable, residents needed relief when temperatures were at their coldest, not just as we head into spring.

The fact remains that the Department of Public Utilities, the very agency now tasked with investigating overcharging, had previously approved these rate increases. Eversource cited the Mass Save program and other operational costs as justification for these hikes, yet its CEO, Joseph R. Nolan, Jr., earned nearly \$19 million in 2023, making him one of the highest-paid utility executives in the nation. How can it be that struggling families were forced to carry the weight of these costs, while executives and shareholders continued to profit?

Governor Healey's long-term strategy, which includes stabilizing energy prices and ensuring transparency in utility billing, is an essential step forward. Expanding discount programs and working to eliminate unnecessary fees will make a difference for many residents in the years to come. But for those who are still recovering from this winter's financial strain, more immediate relief is necessary. A one-time \$50 credit, while helpful, does not come close to addressing the months of hardship families have endured.

The urgency with which rate increases were approved should now be matched with the same urgency in reducing them. Stronger regulatory measures must be put in place to prevent

unchecked price hikes from becoming a seasonal crisis. Families should never again have to face the impossible choice between heating their homes and meeting their basic needs.

The governor's commitment to tackling energy affordability is a step in the right direction, and her leadership on this issue is appreciated. But as these policies take shape, Massachusetts residents deserve solutions that provide immediate, meaningful relief—not just promises for the future. Families have already suffered. It's time to make sure they never have to endure a winter like this again.