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**COMMUNITY ACTION**  
**POVERTY INSTITUTE**  
Research and Public Policy

Testimony before the House Utilities, Energy and Telecommunications Committee

January 13, 2026

Chairman Soliday and Members of the Committee,

My name is Olivia Smith and I am a policy analyst with the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute. We envision an Indiana where financial security allows Hoosiers to better contribute to their families, communities, and the world.

We are neutral on HB 1002 overall, as I will not be speaking to the ratemaking provisions in the bill, but we are here in support of Representative Shonkwiler's language that would help prevent rising utility costs from hurting the health and financial well-being of Hoosier families.

Through our community-needs-driven research, we've found that one basic need that increasingly jeopardizes financial security for many households is utility bills. We just launched our 2026 needs assessments, and while we anticipate hearing from several thousand Hoosiers over the next few weeks before the process is completed, so far utilities have been coming out as the top need for respondents. This is not surprising based upon what we learned from folks across Indiana while creating the report "Billed to the Breaking Point" in 2024.

Conducted in collaboration with Citizens Action Coalition, our “billed to the breaking point” report investigated the rising costs of electricity, and the harms that disproportionately fall on low- and middle-income Hoosiers as a result. We were excited to see alignment between certain components of HB 1002 and some of our policy recommendations from that report, including expanding moratoriums on disconnections to include during times of extreme heat, and establishing energy affordability assistance at the state level through the bill’s mandate of a Low-Income Customer Assistance Program.

As members of the committee continue to work on the bill, we wanted to lift up three key places where the language could be strengthened to help Hoosier families.

First, on page 2, line 32: in defining the true-up cadence for the budget billing, we would like “at least two times during a calendar” to be changed to “no more than two times” per year to avoid overly frequent reconciliations that are still ultimately unaffordable for customers.

Second, on page 6, line 24: we would like to see “extreme heat warning” changed to a definition that more accurately protects energy-burdened low-income households during dangerous heat in the summer months.

Third, beginning on page 24, line 36: in defining a qualifying low-income customer assistance program, we would like the design of eligible customer assistance programs to be approved by the IURC instead of being largely up to the utility’s discretion.

Again, thank you to Representative Shonkwiler and Chairman Soliday for prioritizing price stability and energy affordability for Hoosiers this session, and we look forward to more

opportunities to support policies that improve utility affordability for households across Indiana.