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**State of Vermont
Public Utility Commission**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**VERMONT PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION LIFTS
TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON UTILITY DISCONNECTIONS AND ORDERS
PROTECTIONS FOR CUSTOMERS FACING ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS**

Montpelier, VT, October 8, 2020 – Today the Vermont Public Utility Commission announced that the temporary moratorium on utility service disconnections will end on October 15, 2020. The Commission is also ordering new, mandatory consumer protections for utility customers who are facing economic hardships as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 18, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission granted a temporary moratorium on involuntary utility service disconnections in Vermont. Over the course of the next several months, the Commission extended and expanded the protections in its March moratorium so that Vermonters did not lose essential services during this time.

On August 18, 2020, the Vermont Department of Public Service began its Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program (“VCAAP”). VCAAP provides federally funded financial support to residential and non-residential customers of regulated utilities with past-due balances. Through VCAAP, the Department intends to distribute up to \$8 million until funding runs out. It is hoped that these funds will minimize or even eliminate past-due balances incurred by residential and business customers who have been unable to pay their bills due to impacts from COVID-19, but if those customers do not apply for assistance, the VCAAP funds will expire this December. It is very important for utility customers who have past-due balances to visit the following website as soon as possible for details on the VCAAP and how to apply:
<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-covid-19-arrearage-assistance-program-0>

Last month, the Department and several utilities informed the Commission that many utility customers were not taking advantage of the VCAAP or responding to utility outreach to address their past-due balances. For this reason, the Department and these utilities encouraged the Commission to end the moratorium so that customers would work with their utilities and take advantage of the time-limited VCAAP funds and other resources that can help consumers.

The Commission, in response to these requests, is lifting the moratorium as of October 15, 2020. To help prevent harm to consumers affected by COVID-19 after the moratorium is lifted, the

Commission will also be implementing emergency rules that provide new, mandatory protections for consumers who need assistance with addressing their past-due balances at this time. These new protections will include specific requirements that utilities must follow in seeking disconnections, such as required notices to consumers regarding the availability of VCAAP assistance. Utilities will also be required to provide long-term repayment plans so that consumers have at least 12 months to address any outstanding bills.

Today's Order and all other documents from this proceeding can be found by searching for Case Number 20-0703-INV in ePUC (epuc.vermont.gov). For more information, please contact PUC General Counsel Kyle Landis-Marinello: (802) 828-1158, kyle.landis-marinello@vermont.gov.