

July 24, 2023

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Hon. Michelle L. Phillips
Secretary to the Commission
New York State Public Service Commission
Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 3
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Secretary Phillips,

On June 2, 2022, I sent you a letter urging you to reject or at least significantly reduce NYSEG's proposed rate increases, which will impose a substantial financial burden on folks across this congressional district, particularly seniors on fixed incomes. While I support the Commission's decision to reduce the proposed price hikes, I'm concerned that the Commission nonetheless intends to approve a 22% rate increase, and I am writing now to ask you to make further reductions and provide additional oversight.

NYSEG argues that it must increase rates for two reasons. First, NYSEG says the rate increases are required to upgrade existing infrastructure. That certainly is a laudable goal worthy of support, but it remains unclear the extent to which NYSEG could fund those projects through other sources of revenue, including federal infrastructure investments. Has the Commission determined whether NYSEG has sought federal infrastructure funding as an alternative to rate increases?

Second, NYSEG has argued that high rates of inflation have increased NYSEG's costs, making the rate increases necessary. As I wrote previously, higher rates of inflation hit low-income consumers the hardest and a rate increase would only make their financial situation worse. Regardless, though, inflation has now fallen for eleven consecutive months, so the current macroeconomic situation appears much different today than it was when NYSEG first proposed its rate increases. Has the Commission evaluated whether changed economic circumstances obviate the purported need for NYSEG's requested rate increase?

Too many Upstate New Yorkers are already struggling to make ends meet, and a 22% increase in utility bills will make things even harder for them. That is why I urge the Commission to re-evaluate NYSEG's proposed rate hike, particularly in light of the issues noted above.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JR' with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Josh Riley