



Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.

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Economic Matters

HB 1224

Support Bill

Cancer Support Foundation
Cindy Carter Executive Director

I am Executive Director of Cancer Support Foundation and here to speak for our clients as well as all of those who are facing medical challenges. I am here in support of HB 1224.

Since 2015 I have worked with a program that has now become law called the Critical Medical Needs Program. This program helps anyone with a medical challenge have assistance in the application process for help with their electric and heating bill.

We are dealing with people who are fighting for their lives. We are dealing with people who can barely manage everyday challenges and are facing their power turned off.

Many of these patients apply to the Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) for assistance with their bills. The purpose of OHEP is to provide assistance to low income families towards their electric and heating bills to help keep their power and heat on.

Here is a case that just happened March 4,2020. I got a call from a client and her story illustrates the issues that I have with third party suppliers of electric and gas commodity having contracts with those who are eligible for energy assistance grants. She saw that her bill was a lot higher than usual. She called BG&E and they told her that she had a third-party company as her supplier. She had never signed up nor ever signed a contract with the company involved.

My client filed a complaint with the Public Service Commission who contacted her supplier. This client's third-party supplier presented a signed contract with a forged signature. The third-party supplier then withdrew the contract. She has been unable to follow through with getting reimbursed due to her health issues.



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My client applied for energy assistance from the state agency Office of Home Energy program. She gets a special grant for electric arrearage bills so that this inflated bill could be paid. Her power is kept on by the state agency funds paying the inflated rates of a third-party supplier who fraudulently charged this client to start in the first place.

This is major misuse of state funding. This also jeopardizes a client use of a fund that is there to help them keep their lights on especially with medical challenges.

Because of the inflated bills due to the higher than stand offer service rates of many of the third-party suppliers, many of these families are left with large balances after the grants then they would if not on third-party rates. The result is Office of Home Energy Program's effectiveness is diluted.

Families are then having to turn to other resources to get help which leads to a domino effect for other resources running out of funds and families being turned away. Many of these families will have their service terminated.

To me it is a misuse of public and private funding to pay for bills that are for services charged at a higher rate than stand offer services.

Cancer Support Foundation supports HB1224 to not allow third-party suppliers who do not offer at or below standard offer services rates to enroll those who use Office of Home Energy Program funds to help with the bills.