



June 5, 2020

Dear Members of the House State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee,

Black Hills Energy is in support of HB 20-1412- Energy Assistance, which allocates \$10 million of the \$70 million in unallocated Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to the low-income energy assistance fund to help households facing economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coloradans are currently experiencing unprecedented financial strain and some utility customers have been put into a position where they will be unable to pay their bills at this time. According to the Department of Labor and Employment over 500,000 Coloradans have been approved for some form of unemployment compensation in the past 11 weeks. As jobless claims continue to increase, the number of households eligible for energy assistance will rise dramatically, and the ability to serve these needs must rise with it.

We strongly support programs that assist our customers with energy assistance and are doing our part to help customers in this time of great need. Some customer support programs specific to Black Hills Energy include:

- Black Hills Energy Assistance Program (BHEAP) program, which is a bill payment assistance program for income qualified customers
- Black Hills Cares, which is customer and company funded and administered by Energy Outreach Colorado. These funds go directly for local use in helping customers pay for energy related expenses. As part of this program, Black Hills Energy matches dollar for dollar all customer contributions and is the *only* electric utility to provide shareholder funds for this purpose. In the past 10 years, Black Hills Cares provided more than \$4 million in donations to assist those in need.
- Prior to the issuance of the Governor's Executive Order, to support our customers who may be impacted by the nation's response to COVID-19, Black Hills Energy suspended all customer disconnects for nonpayment across its service territory.
- Black Hills Energy offers various assistance options to our customers such as payment arrangements, budget billing and medical extensions.

Right now, more than ever, Coloradans need a safety net to ensure that they can protect their families and power their homes. HB 20-1412, Energy Assistance, will help bolster programs currently in existence and provide critical support to those who need it most.

As a provider of essential energy services, we are ready and are doing everything we can to continue to serve our customers with safe, reliable service in these uncertain times. Thank you for your consideration of this critical bill. If we can help to answer any questions, please contact

Christina Rosendahl, Manager of Government Affairs at 303-378-1602 or at christina.rosendahl@blackhillscorp.com.

Thank you,

Vance Crocker, VP, Black Hills Energy, Colorado Electric

Susan Bailey, VP, Black Hills Energy, Colorado Gas