

April 6, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

**Re: Washington Public Utility Districts COVID-19 response and request for state support**

Dear Governor Inslee:

On behalf of Washington's 27 not-for-profit, community-owned public utility districts that serve approximately 2.3 million people, we are requesting your support in ensuring our communities continue to receive affordable, reliable utility services necessary not just to meet the immediate health and safety needs during the pandemic emergency, but to ensure the continued viability into the future of our vital services.

In response to the COVID-19 emergency, PUDs proactively put in place a variety of measures intended to maintain services to customers experiencing economic hardship due to the COVID-19 event. Each PUD carefully evaluated and took into consideration the immediate needs of their community along with the financial resources of the utility in addressing the impacts of the emergency in the short term as well as the long term. The measures include suspension of disconnections, waiving late fees, working with customers on payment plans, delaying scheduled rate increases, instituting payment relief programs, applying deposits to existing bills and others. We appreciated the language in your emergency proclamation encouraging utilities to do these things as it provides a legal backstop to the actions taken by the PUDs.

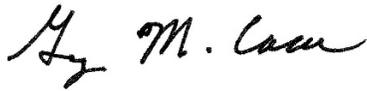
As you consider future legislative or emergency actions, we strongly urge you to ensure that the State's not-for-profit public utility districts are not required to assume untenable economic burdens that will lead to serious impacts on our ability to provide vital service into the future. While we are managing to assist customers to date, we recognize this emergency doesn't have an immediate end in sight and the financial impacts could be significant to the PUDs and their customer bases in the future. In that light, we ask the state to support economic relief measures for our customers through policy actions. Following are some initial ideas to facilitate short-term needs:

- Waiving a portion of the utility tax paid by PUDs in direct proportion to the amount expended by PUDs for ratepayer relief and service continuity.
- Allowing PUDs to count customer relief as compliance under the Energy Independence Act for a period of two years.
- Allowing for revision of terms for public works board loans to increase the length of payback by a maximum of five years.
- Establishing a statewide utility assistance fund in which industries and organizations that have benefited from the investments made by utility customers can contribute to ratepayer assistance. The funds would be disbursed to utilities for ratepayer relief programs.
- Actions to help immediately to support internet connectivity.

Public utility districts are also looking to the future and we are well positioned to help with the recovery effort. We hope to work closely with your office on other policy approaches that will hasten a return to normalcy. We also recognize there will be a need to look at current policies and prioritize and reassess them considering the current crisis. We are looking forward to that conversation and hope to provide meaningful contributions to it.

Every PUD is committed to the health and safety of their customers. Our employees are performing essential work necessary for continuation of basic services needed by first responders, hospitals and health care services, grocery stores, people working from home and more. We need your support to preserve and protect our communities now and into the future. We truly are all in this together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. M. Caan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

George Caan, Executive Director  
Washington PUD Association