

Environmental Justice & Infrastructure Initiative: Leaders call for energy affordability

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MILWAUKEE — Environmental justice leaders from the [Wisconsin Environmental Justice & Infrastructure Initiative](#) (EJII) hosted a press conference on Wednesday, June 14 to discuss the pressing need for alternative bill payment programs and Percentage of Income Payment Programs, or PIPPs, for electric customers in Wisconsin.

The press conference directly preceded one of two listening sessions about alternative bill payment programs hosted by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) in Milwaukee, where participants were introduced to the concept of PIPPs and existing alternative payment programs, asked questions, and held both small group discussions and open forum conversations to share feedback.

These programs allow customers to participate in more equitable payment programs and pay their bills in a way that better fits their financial circumstances. The PSCW is considering these programs because they believe that they could help customers who are struggling to pay their bills and help reduce the number of customers who get their power disconnected.

“There is an energy affordability crisis in Wisconsin, and we need urgent action to make energy affordable and accessible to all Wisconsinites,” said Antonio Butts, Executive Director of Walnut Way Conservation Corp., the organization facilitating the Wisconsin EJII. “Percentage of Income Payment Programs and alternative payment programs are a necessary tool and must be proactively and automatically offered to residents in need.”

The Wisconsin EJII is advocating for three main outcomes to benefit Wisconsinites:

- Reducing the energy burden on Wisconsinites by lowering the costs of energy, including through investment in clean energy;
- Introducing a 6% income cap for PIPP with transparency in the negotiation process – including clear communication throughout; and
- Requiring automatic eligibility/enrollment in alternative payment programs for all energy customers in need of assistance through equitable financing structures.

“While energy affordability disproportionately affects traditionally underserved communities – it impacts many of us in one way or another, at one time or another,” said Butts. “Energy is essential to survival, and all aspects of our lives depend on it. We need the PSCW to demand affordability and accessibility from utility providers across the state.”

A second listening session will be held today, Wednesday, June 14, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Neighborhood House of Milwaukee (2819 W. Richardson Pl.). Public comment can also be submitted via the [PSCW website](#) through June 20.