



August 20, 2021

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Garrick Rochow, President and CEO
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Mr. Norcia, Rochow, and Baker,

First, thank you for your time and that of your teams as we work to address the fallout of the recent storms. As you are well aware, Climate change is producing record-setting temperatures and increasing extreme weather events. In my first 30 days in office, Michigan experienced a polar vortex where we saw first-hand how extreme weather events stressed our ability to maintain the reliability of our energy systems. While the new climate realities are testing all of us, Michigan utilities [currently rank in the bottom quartile of reliability](#) and we must move quickly to do better.

This has been apparent over the last few weeks as over 750,000 Michiganders lost power – with many outages lasting for several days on some of the hottest days of the year. While your incredible crews have been working around the clock to restore power, thousands remain without service a week later. As you know, power outages of this magnitude pose untold hardships for Michigan families and businesses, including the loss of frozen and refrigerated food and medicine; interference with oxygen, CPAP machines, and other home medical equipment; the need to find alternative housing and workspaces for those continuing to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic; and exacerbating the health threats posed by hot weather, particularly for communities of color and low-income residents who suffer the most. This is unacceptable. Absent immediate action, impacts on Michigan families will only intensify, lending real urgency to our work to maintain system-wide reliability while decarbonizing the economy.



Over the past two years, the State of Michigan has taken several steps to boost reliability and study the electric grid. This includes working to implement the recommendations identified in the 2019 Statewide Energy Assessment and launching the MI Power Grid initiative. Recently, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) approved "surge" efforts for both Consumers and DTE to address the backlog in tree trimming, a critical tool to reduce outages, and required your three companies to file five-year distribution plans to ensure greater transparency on distribution investments and planning. In addition, for both Consumers Energy and DTE Electric Company, your distribution plans must include metrics around distribution performance – including number and duration of outages – and both financial incentives and penalties. Finally, the MPSC is in the process of updating the utility service quality rules around outage credits and technical standards for electric utilities.

While I appreciate your efforts to date, it is clear, however, that more is needed to make our electric infrastructure more resilient to extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change. Michigan's investor-owned utilities should:

- Automatically credit those customers who experienced outages who are eligible under the MPSC's service quality rules, and expand the amount of credits paid, either through higher credit amounts and/or reducing the outage duration needed to qualify for a credit.
- Announce additional investments and redirect existing resources to improve reliability through tree trimming and grid hardening. These investments should be financed in a manner that does not add to the consumers' burden.

Michigan families are bearing the brunt of climate change right now. The state's electric grid is at an inflection point, and if we are going to continue to protect Michigan families, our grid must be up to the challenge. I know you are committed to ensuring that Michigan is prepared to ensure the production and delivery of safe, stable, and reliable energy to all Michiganders. We must have a resilient and reliable grid with adequate generation without families shouldering heavy costs.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this request. I look forward to working with you to put Michigan families first.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor

cc: Dan Scripps, Chair, Michigan Public Service Commission