

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Authorization and Order Directing Utilities  
to Extend Emergency Customer Protections  
to Support California Customers Through  
June 30, 2021 and to File Transition Plans  
for the Expiration of the Emergency  
Customer Protections.

Draft Resolution M-4849  
(Filed February 11, 2021)

**REPLY COMMENTS OF THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE ON DRAFT  
RESOLUTION M-4849**

MAD STANO  
Senior Energy Equity Legal Counsel  
The Greenlining Institute  
360 14<sup>th</sup> St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Telephone: (510) 809-1820  
Email: mad.stano@greenlining.org

PAUL GOODMAN  
Technology Equity Director  
The Greenlining Institute  
360 14<sup>th</sup> St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Telephone: (510) 898-2053  
E-mail: paulg@greenlining.org

Dated: January 29, 2021

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**I. Introduction**

Pursuant to Rule 14.5 of the California Public Utilities Commission’s (“Commission”) Rules of Practice and Procedure and the notice accompanying Draft Resolution M-4849 (“Draft Resolution”), The Greenlining Institute (“Greenlining”) respectfully submits the following Reply Comments on the Draft Resolution. Consistent with many parties and commenters’ Opening Comments, we strongly support the Commission extending emergency customer protections for energy, water and communications customers based on the devastating and “ongoing economic hardship[s] caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.”<sup>1</sup>

**II. Discussion**

California’s economic recession related to the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacts cost-burdened low-income households and people of color. Even prior to the recession, people of color in California disproportionately experienced difficulty paying for necessary household expenses.<sup>2</sup> During the recession, people of color in California are experiencing higher job loss and unemployment rates.<sup>3</sup> During the pandemic, COVID-19 infection and mortality rates

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<sup>1</sup> California Public Utilities Commission, Draft Resolution, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> California Budget Center, *ISSUE BRIEF: California’s 17 Million Renters Face Housing Instability and Inequity Before and After COVID-19*, (January 2021) <https://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IB-Renters-Remediated.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Public Policy Institute of California, *Will This Recession Deepen California’s Economic Divide?*, (December 2020) <https://www.ppic.org/blog/will-this-recession-deepen-californias-economic-divide/>.

disproportionately impact people of color in California as well.<sup>4</sup> Recent Commission data confirms that due to economic impacts associated with COVID-19 and increased residential energy and telecommunications use related to shelter-in-place orders, additional low-income Californians are facing significantly damaging energy and other utility burdens forcing households to choose between paying utility bills and for other necessities.<sup>5</sup> The Commission must extend emergency protections to ensure all Californians, especially low-income Californians and people of color, can retain access to essential utility services during this ongoing emergency.

### **III. Conclusion**

Greenlining respectfully requests the Commission adopt the Draft Resolution and extend vital protections for residential and small business customers. Justice and reason<sup>6</sup> require the Commission to ensure low-income Californians and communities of color disproportionately overburdened by the negative health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic can affordably access fundamental services.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

/s/ Mad Stano

MAD STANO  
Senior Energy Equity Legal Counsel  
The Greenlining Institute  
360 14<sup>th</sup> St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Telephone: (510) 809-1820  
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<sup>4</sup> California Department of Public Health, *COVID-19 Race and Ethnicity Data*, (January 27, 2021), <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Race-Ethnicity.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> CPUC Energy Division, CPUC Workshop on COVID Impacts on Customers in Energy Sectors, (November 12, 2020), <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUCWebsite/Content/UtilitiesIndustries/Energy/DER/COVID%20Workshop%2020Presentations.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> California Public Utilities Code § 451.