

CHAIR
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

COMMITTEES
ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND SMALL BUSINESS
HIGHER EDUCATION
RACING, GAMING AND WAGERING
WOMEN'S ISSUES

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE



SENATOR JAMES F. GAUGHRAN
SENATOR, 5TH DISTRICT

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Mr. Thomas Falcone
Chief Executive Officer
Long Island Power Authority
333 Earle Ovington Blvd., 403
Uniondale, New York 11553

September 23, 2020

Dear Mr. Falcone,

Please accept into the record the **enclosed 3,243 testimonials** from constituents in my district as testimony to their experiences as a result of LIPA's mismanagement and failed oversight during Tropical Storm Isaias.

As you know, **more than 645,000 residents across Long Island lost power** following Tropical Storm Isaias, ranging from temporary outages to sustained outages of nearly two weeks. Customers on critical life support equipment including oxygen tanks were abandoned, and elderly constituents were stranded with no ability to report their outage or contact emergency services for upwards of two weeks. County emergency management officials were given erroneous information, if any at all, during critical response periods following the storm.

I believe it is vital that the experiences of each of these constituents, who took the time to share their harrowing experiences with me, be entered into the official record. It is imperative that LIPA take meaningful action to prevent this type of mismanagement from occurring again. LIPA maintains an oversight role that must be adequately conducted, and the failures thus far leave me gravely concerned about the ability for Long Island to sustain future storms both during the ongoing hurricane season and in years to come.

Of the most egregious findings from my community survey were that **96% of respondents lost power, 58% of whom were never able to contact PSEG** about the power outage. Residents were unable to utilize PSEG's costly -- and taxpayer subsidized -- call center, outage reporting website, or text system. In turn, desperate customers turned to my office and others for information, though we too, were unable to receive accurate information, if any at all, from PSEG officials.

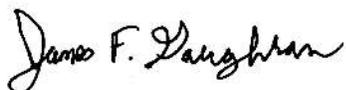
52% of respondents waited 5 days or more for PSEG to restore their power, amid the summer warmth and a heatwave, with 67% of respondents reporting that PSEG failed to restore the power before the estimated time of restoration.

As our nation continues to grapple with the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and unemployment figures soaring, **63% of respondents were forced to discard food**, with an **average amount of \$434.66**. My colleagues and I called upon LIPA and PSEG to act fairly and justly by establishing a food and medicine reimbursement program, and while PSEG eventually succumbed to our demands, the program is ultimately funded by ratepayers, not corporate shareholders, is inadequate. PSEG's reimbursement program, which pales in comparison to other utilities, namely ConEd's reimbursement program, is simply insufficient to properly compensate these families for their loss.

Of most concern was the finding that more than **20% of respondents had no information about PSEG's Critical Care program**, which services individuals who rely on oxygen tanks, intravenous feeding machines, and other devices vital for medically vulnerable persons. These respondents believed that someone in their house would qualify, which leads me to ask -- why have PSEG and LIPA failed to sufficiently communicate these programs to eligible individuals? Moreover, in the days following the storm **I encountered several individuals who were on PSEG's Critical Care List, but who were ignored by PSEG**. A 93 year-old woman who survives on oxygen and is on PSEG's Critical Care List was told by PSEG "to stay with a friend or just go to the hospital."

It is my sincere belief that LIPA has failed in its oversight role over PSEG. I am confident, however, that my colleagues and I are committed to increasing accountability and oversight over PSEG and LIPA. Long Islanders should never experience such failed management, electrical delivery performance, or abhorrent customer service again.

Sincerely,



James F. Gaughran
State Senate, 5th District