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Thank you, Chairman Patterson and fellow committee members for giving me the opportunity to address your committee and discuss an issue very important to everyone at DTE Energy.

At DTE Energy, we are acutely aware of how difficult this winter has been for our customers as Michigan continues to wrestle with the economic crisis, problems in the housing sector, job losses in manufacturing and a long period of prolonged cold weather. For the past several years, DTE Energy has been working with a number of agencies, organizations and, of course, the Michigan Public Service Commission to provide a broad range of protections and assistance to help prevent electric or gas service shutoffs to our customers who are in need.

We share the concern expressed by Governor Granholm in her State of the State address. The anxiety and distress experienced by the growing number of our fellow citizens who recently have become unemployed cannot be dismissed. We are ready to work with the Commission to define the details behind the Governor's emergency order to ensure that shutoff protection is provided while protecting the interests of customers who are struggling to stay current with their bills.

I am proud to say that DTE Energy has gone above and beyond the steps required in MPSC rules in our efforts to provide additional assistance and protection for customers, especially low-income and senior customers.

First, however, allow me to tell you about our policy towards senior citizens. Very simply, we are committed to assisting them – especially low-income seniors – in their efforts to keep their homes warm in the winter. DTE has confirmed more than 560,000 senior customers, all of whom are protected from having their service discontinued during the winter months. Shutoff protection for seniors enrolled in our programs begins when they are age 62. Currently, the Michigan Public Service Commission's Winter Protection Program, as identified in the Billing Practice Rules, provides shutoff protection to seniors beginning at age 65.

Additionally, in the past, seniors had to self identify in order for DTE Energy to have a record of their eligibility for senior shutoff protection status. DTE Energy has recently enhanced our system to automatically update our customer profiles when a customer turns age 62. This enables us to **proactively** reach out to

senior customers to let them know they are eligible to enroll in a senior shutoff protection program, and to call them if they are in shutoff status.

If seniors are enrolled in the Winter Protection Program, which ends for our low-income seniors at the end of April, we proactively call them to inform them of their eligibility for the Shutoff Protection Program, which protects them year round.

Now I will outline the number of DTE customer assistance programs the company offers.

We have identified more than 150,000 active low income customers. Of this total, 85,000 are currently enrolled in a shut-off protection plan. However, we can only help customers if they self identify and ask for help. There is no mechanism in place that qualifies customers for assistance other than either a customer calling asking for assistance or the utility reaching out to them and asking if they are in need of assistance.

DTE Energy offers or participates in a dozen different initiatives that either provide assistance to households in need or tries to connect them to additional sources of help.

DTE Energy's Customer Assistance Programs

Case Management

DTE Energy has a team of specialists who can assist low-income residential customers reduce their unpaid balances by providing a personal payment plan, agency referrals and follow-up. To enroll, customers should call 1-800-545-8046 and must have:

- An unpaid balance greater than \$750
- No illegal usage
- Household income at or below 200 percent of the Federal income eligibility guidelines

Winter Protection Plan (WPP)

The Winter Protection Plan protects low-income customers from service shutoff due to non-payment between November 1 and March 31. During this period, customers must pay a budget amount. After March 31, the required bill payment will increase to cover the winter bills.

Senior Citizen customers, 62 or older, are entitled to protection from shut-off from November 1 through March 31. This protection is extended through April 30 for low income senior citizens. During the WPP period, senior customers are not required to make specific payment amounts, but may enroll in a flexible payment plan.

Shut-Off Protection Plan (SPP)

This plan is available to all residential customers regardless of income, churches and non-profit organizations that assist customers with human services (that is shelters, food pantries, payment assistance etc). The plan provides year round protection from shut-off as long as the customer is enrolled and in good standing. The budget amount is reconciled after the first 12 months. For customers who wish to remain on the program at the end of 12 months, the budget amount is adjusted based on their usage and any outstanding balance owing. Enrollment requirements are:

- Down payment consisting of a percentage of the past due amount
- Monthly budget plan that spreads out your future bills in 12 to 24 equal monthly payment plus equal monthly payments on any outstanding balance

The Heat and Warmth (THAW) Fund

DTE Energy partners with THAW, a non-profit organization, which provides last-resort energy assistance to low-income families. Customers who meet the household income guidelines, are in shut off status or have been shut off and have exhausted all assistance available from federal and state funding programs may be eligible for assistance.

THAW welcomes donations. As a longtime supporter of THAW's efforts, DTE Energy will match personal contributions to THAW. To make a contribution, call 1-800-866-8429.

Home Heating Credit (HHC)

Customers qualify for Michigan Home Heating Credit if their income is at or below 110 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Customers that receive assistance from the State are also encouraged to file for the Energy Draft. DTE Energy e-files the Home Heating Credit for customers who do not have any other income or have already filed their taxes but did not file for the Home Heating Credit. Customers interested in filing their Home Heating Credit with DTE Energy or inquiring about assistance to file for the HHC should give us a call at 1-866-200-2386.

Medical Emergency

Shutoff to an account due to non-payment may be postponed up to 21 days if a medical emergency exists in the home. Written proof from a doctor or notice from a public health or social services agency must be provided.

Double Protection Notice

This plan is helpful in case of an unexpected event, such as an extended vacation or a long hospital stay. It allows DTE Energy to send a duplicate shut-off notice to a consenting friend, relative or agency. The recipient of the duplicate shut-off is not responsible for paying the overdue bill but is alerted in

case he/she chooses to take action on behalf of the customer. Call 1-800-477-4747 for more info or to enroll.

Military Protection

This plan provides up to 90 days shutoff protection if the customer of record is called to full time active military service by the President of the United States or the Governor of Michigan during a declared national or state emergency or war. Verification of active duty status may be required and extensions on the period may also be requested. Call 1-800-477-4747 for more information or to enroll.

Cents for Energy

Cents for Energy is a customer-funded, year-round energy assistance funding program. The fund will be administered by The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW). Cents for Energy will target DTE Energy customers experiencing severe difficulty paying their DTE Energy bills and whose gross household income is between 201% and 250% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Customers have 3 Donation Options

- Option 1 - Round up monthly bill to the nearest dollar
- Option 2 - Round up monthly bill to the nearest dollar and add a \$1 or more
- Option 3 - Refer to THAW to make a one-time donation

Credit Counseling

DTE Energy works with Green Path, a non-profit consumer credit counseling service to provide financial counseling and debt management services.

- Financial counseling includes a discussion with a certified counselor, a customized financial budget and personalized recommendations. Financial counseling is provided without charge.
- Debt management involves Green Path acting as the customer's advocate with all of their creditors, including DTE Energy, negotiating payment rates and terms. In a debt management program, the customer deposits funds with Green Path which, in turn, pays the creditors.

Community Energy Solutions

A new program for Detroit residents is the Community Energy Solutions project, which involves four churches in Detroit and involves a partnership with the WARM Training Center, THAW, a credit and budget counselor and a tax preparer. DTE Energy and its partners have "mini-offices" in the churches to provide assistance and support right in the neighborhoods of some of our customers hardest hit by the economic downturn.

Osborn Energy Savers

Another program, the Osborn Energy Savers Initiative, is a collaborative involving DTE Energy, the Skillman Foundation and THAW and features the WARM Training Center for energy efficiency and weatherization workshops. The program is designed to promote energy conservation and cost savings through a series of workshops and home energy consultations.

I hope I have provided you and the committee with some insight that will be useful to you in your discussion. At DTE Energy, we are constantly evaluating the effectiveness of our programs and looking for ways we can collaborate with other public and private agencies to stretch the assistance funding available to maximize the number of customers who can be helped.

Our goal is to help our customers get access to the assistance that they need to pay their energy bills, improve the energy efficiency of their homes, and, most importantly, keep their homes warm and their lights on.

Thank you.

I look forward to answering your questions.