Good afternoon, My name is Kerim Odekon, I am a ratepayer and a member of the environmental justice coalition Brookhaven Landfill Action and Remediation Group (BLARG). I remember vividly my first summer in our new home where we lost power for almost a week. I was a new primary care doc, in a pandemic, unable to access my EMR from home where a lot of my work gets done outside the clinic. Multiple requests for information from PSEG were ignored or with incorrect text updates. When out-of-state contractors finally came to fix our lines, the supervisors told us that they were unaware that our community had been out of power for so long and no one could explain the delay.

The next year, as Asplundh contractors were doing utility line maintenance nearby, I asked one of the workers if their current utility work means I do not need to buy/install a generator - he told me he himself lives locally and is looking to buy a generator, these “upgrades” won’t change that…even the utility line worker in my neighborhood does not trust PSEG for a reliable grid.

As a primary care doc, I routinely fill out PSEG forms for life support equipment and medical emergency certification. Have you ever read the form? It tells medically frail ratepayers to buy a generator. It is highlighted that “all customers have a responsibility to arrange for medical needs during an emergency”. After spending a week in the dark in 2020, with many vulnerable neighbors in their 80s and 90s, I understand why PSEG highlights the private responsibility of medically frail customers to not rely on PSEG. We are an Island, in a climate crisis, with ⅔ our grid above ground. Blackouts with storms and heat waves do not inspire confidence that PSEG is fully invested in our grid. In last year’s LIPA Phase II report - the fundamental cause noted for the 2020 power crisis was “PSEG Long Island is not organized or incentivized to put Long Island customers first. LIPA contract represents only 4% of PSEG Enterprise Profits.” And before PSEG, National Grid was not incentivized to put Long Islanders first. In this case, a third time is not the charm. Our electric grid is critical infrastructure, and we need a fully publicly operated grid which is transparent and accountable to the public.

I also want to express some concerns regarding appointments to this Commission’s advisory committee -

1. Supervisor Romaine is conflicted with LIPA at this time, he relies entirely on LIPA for his plans to create a privately owned and operated “energy park” on at the Brookhaven Landfill where he is leasing public land to multiple private for-profit small utility projects while showering them with tax breaks through the Brookhaven IDA, defunding our local majority-minority majority-economically disadvantaged South Country school district. When I reached out to the Town of Brookhaven regarding their recent no-bid solar farm contracts, Brookhaven’s attorney’s told me the solar farms were bid by LIPA but when I forwarded the Town’s FOIL response, LIPA’s Deputy General Counsel James Miskiewicz wrote back “Brookhaven is mistaken that i.on bid on and was selected by LIPA to build a solar farm.” Supervisor Romaine’s appointment raises concerns regarding the Commission’s Conflict of Interest/Ethics Policy, if it exists.
2. LIA Chair Matt Cohen - the Long Island Association lists a PSEG executive on its board of directors, raising concern as to whether he can give unbiased direction to this Committee.
3. Mitch Pally - a Long Island Builders Institute retiree and Board Member of Brookhaven IDA.. Mitch Pally testified via LIBI’s Govn’t Affairs Director Amani Hosein “Long Island Builders Institute believes that P.S.E.&G. Long Island is in the best position of any of the possible alternatives, to accomplish both goals and to modernize our electric system so that it can survive whatever Mother Nature throws at Long Island.” Mr Pally has already pledged allegiance to PSEG and cannot then give unbiased direction to this Committee.(p83<https://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Common/ViewDoc.aspx?DocRefId=%7B1DF34A91-47F1-41B0-881C-3E8A45AA1D5D%7D>)

The “public private” model of LIPA has failed repeatedly. Utility monopoly private-profits and public-losses are not a sustainable model. I applaud Legislator Theile and Thomas who are doing the hard work of developing and presenting an action plan for implementing a true public power model for residents of Long Island and the Rockaways. They are doing what their predecessors should have done for the past few decades, but were unwilling to do. The idea that this public power action plan is not already in place and updated regularly is in part what allows private utility monopolies to do as they wish at the public’s expense. LIPA should be a publicly owned and operated, not-for-profit electric utility that is public, accountable and committed to a just transition towards a green grid.

We all see the utility of public water, of public education, of public safety, of public parks. What is different about our electricity?

Kerim Odekon, MD MRP MSc

Brookhaven Hamlet, NY 11719