April 20, 2022

The Honorable Ben Hueso

Chair, Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee

State Capitol

1021 O Street, Suite 7210

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1208 Hueso- Support**

Dear Chairman. Hueso,

 We write in strong support of Senate Bill 1208 in order to modernize and streamline the low-income utility program applications and enrollment process in California.

 [ insert language on org]

 SB 1208 seeks to use our 21st century technology to improve program enrollment and delivery. Specifically, SB 1208 asks the California Utilities Commission and Public Utilities to maximize data sharing during the application process to facilitate the overall enrollment process for individuals and families. Moreover, the bill asks the commission to use existing third-party verifiers to work on low income programs across the spectrum of services—right now they are limited to just the telephonic industry.

 California has an estimated 4.1 million individuals living below 200% Federal Poverty Level. Many of these individuals are eligible for existing programs. However, many programs are under enrolled. As we saw during COVID, the state needs to make sure that eligible individuals and families access our safety net programs- particularly during a crisis. Low income individuals and families should not be overburdened to repeatedly prove they are poor on various applications. California has access to available technology that can “auto-fill” existing applications as applicable. We need to make sure we are using all available tools to modernize our application process.

 SB 1208 will facilitate the application process across electricity, water, gas, telephone and other utility sectors and in addition save programs administrative dollars and staff time.

 We urge your AYE vote.