



## Cunningham Township

Danielle Chynoweth, Supervisor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Nearly 200 Champaign County Residents Facing Power shut-offs this Week as COVID Surges and Weather Gets Colder**

Nearly 200 Champaign County residents face utility shut-offs by Ameren this week, putting residents at risk during a surge in COVID-19 cases locally and statewide, and as the weather gets colder. This follows six weeks of local shut-offs that have left local residents scrambling for solutions.

Yesterday morning, Cedric Robinson of Urbana was in the shower getting ready for work when his bathroom lights suddenly went dark. He had been out of work due to COVID and recently got new employment. “Ameren called me on Friday and I set up a payment plan with them. I told them I get paid Wednesday and would pay then, and they said that would be fine. Then Wednesday morning they cut my power off,” Mr. Robinson told Cunningham Township staff. Township then paid \$337.48 from their Angel Donor fund to get Mr. Robinson’s power turned back on.

“Ameren’s so- called ‘voluntary moratorium’ for utility shut-offs is not working. We need the Governor to enact a statewide moratorium on all utility shut-offs now. Anything less than that will put all of us at risk,” said Danielle Chynoweth, Cunningham Township Supervisor. “The shut-off list for this week alone has an overwhelming 193 residents. Many of them are walking distance from my home. Our team mailed every Urbana household and

canvassed several dozen to offer help. I spoke with an elderly woman in her late 70s, a man with a disability, and a woman dealing with domestic violence. People are already struggling with so much, I can believe we would allow their power to be cut on top of it all.”

According to [Ameren’s Quarter 2 earnings call](#), Ameren’s profits per share increased 36% from quarter 2 of 2019 to quarter 2 of 2020.

The Public Utilities Act requires Ameren to notify local public health departments about any customers with non-pay disconnections during November-March. CUPHD Board spoke at their Study Session Friday, October 30th about the utility shut-offs and what CUPHD could do to intervene and support. The CUPHD Board asked Julie Pryde to write a letter to Governor Pritzker, Ameren, Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) and other leaders calling for a statewide moratorium. Ms. Chynoweth plans to speak before the ICC for the second time today at 1pm calling for a state-imposed moratorium.

Cunningham Township released a [flyer](#) on Tuesday and mailed it to the 73 households in the Township who are facing shuts offs. It states that anyone facing disconnections should immediately:

- 1) Call Ameren and set up a payment plan. Let them know if they face a COVID hardship or are within 200% of the poverty level: 1-800-755-5000
- 2) Apply for LIHEAP energy assistance through the Regional Planning Commission. Walk-ins are Thursdays at 1776 E. Washington Street or call 217-384-1226 or visit [www.ccrpc.org/liheap](http://www.ccrpc.org/liheap) to make an appointment.
- 3) City of Urbana residents should contact Cunningham Township so they can track and provide support: 217-384-4144.

Chynoweth is calling for concerned residents to contact the Governor’s Office using a line set up by Food and Water Watch: 866-872-5958.

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