

Dear Chair James and Members of the Committee,

I am a Vermont resident writing to respectfully urge you to keep the existing no-cost opt-out for smart (advanced metering infrastructure) meters fully intact. I understand there is committee consensus to preserve the opt-out itself, but that electric utilities have testified in favor of imposing a charge, and that the committee is now considering language that would allow such fees while including findings that smart meters cause “no health harms.”

I strongly oppose any provision that would require Vermonters to pay in order to say “no” to a wireless smart meter on their home. This is fundamentally an equity issue. Many Vermonters who wish to opt out do so because of legitimate health concerns related to radiofrequency (RF) radiation exposure or because of serious cybersecurity and privacy risks (the meter collects detailed electricity-usage data from inside the home). Forcing these residents to pay a fee — the amount of which is still undetermined — effectively makes the opt-out available only to those who can afford it. Low-income families, seniors on fixed incomes, and others who are financially struggling will be unable to exercise this choice. In practice, they will be compelled to accept technology they do not want.

Requiring payment turns a basic right — the ability to protect one’s health and privacy — into a privilege reserved for the wealthy. No Vermonter should have to be rich in order to say “no” to a device that emits RF radiation and transmits private household data. The health and cybersecurity concerns that drive many opt-out requests are real to the people experiencing them, and those concerns deserve respect regardless of the committee’s current discussion of scientific findings. People should never be forced to pay simply to avoid a technology they believe poses risks to their well-being or their family’s privacy.

I therefore ask the committee to:

Maintain the current free opt-out for all Vermonters who choose it;
Reject any amendments in S.213 (or any other legislation) that would authorize utilities to charge customers for opting out of electric smart meters; and
Ensure that the final bill protects the long-standing no-cost policy that Vermonters have relied upon.

Thank you for your time and service on this important issue. I am happy to answer any questions and would greatly appreciate your leadership in keeping the smart-meter opt-out free and accessible to every Vermonter who needs it.

Sincerely,

Leyla Torres

