

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 11, 2018

Marcy L. Reed  
President  
National Grid of Massachusetts  
40 Sylvan Road  
Waltham, MA 02451

Dear Ms. Reed,

We write to request your assistance in ensuring that the gas workers locked out by National Grid are available to help with the Merrimack Valley's recovery from the gas explosions on September 13, 2018, rather than sitting idle while their skill, training, and experience are desperately needed.

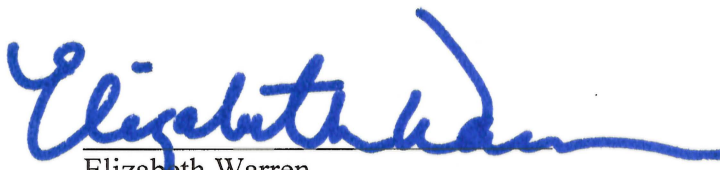
As you know, a series of gas explosions on September 13, 2018 in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover, Massachusetts caused as many as 70 explosions and fires, injured at least 25 people, resulted in the death of an 18-year-old in Lawrence, and forced the evacuation of thousands of families from their homes for several days. While most of the affected families are back in their homes, thousands of residences and hundreds of businesses continue to lack gas service, and Columbia Gas, which services the affected area, has announced that it will need to replace 45 miles of old gas pipeline. State officials have put forth a plan to complete this work and restore gas service on a rolling basis by November 19, 2018. In the meantime, skilled workers will also need to evaluate all gas appliances in the affected area, many of which will need to be replaced, and install space heaters and hotplates for the customers who need them.

This is a crisis for the Commonwealth. For at least six more weeks, thousands of Merrimack Valley residents will be unable to undertake normal daily activities, as they cannot use normal cooking equipment or take hot showers and will be forced to use space heaters and hot plates that are potentially dangerous. A wide variety of local businesses will be unable to function normally, and thus will bring in no revenue. As the weather gets colder, these circumstances will become increasingly dangerous, particularly for the elderly, disabled, and young residents of the affected communities. For these reasons, we have been in regular touch with local and state officials, Columbia Gas, and its parent company NiSource, to offer the assistance of our staffs and convey the importance of fully restoring gas service to the Merrimack Valley as quickly and safely as possible.

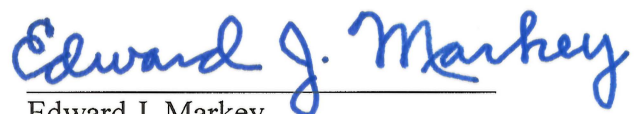
Repairing the gas pipeline and restoring service in a timely manner will require a large workforce of trained, certified skilled gas workers, among others. Since late June, you have locked out approximately 1,250 skilled gas workers from their jobs due to a dispute over contract negotiations. The loss of these workers has sparked safety concerns and potentially other problems unrelated to Columbia Gas's service in Merrimack Valley,<sup>1</sup> such as an error earlier this week causing 300 homes in Woburn to temporarily lose service due to over-pressurized gas.<sup>2</sup> Now, the households trying to recover from the September 13 explosions may be suffering from your workers' unavailability as well. While you have reportedly sent 200 workers from Rhode Island, New York, and elsewhere in Massachusetts to assist in the Merrimack Valley recovery efforts, the workers you have locked out remain idle, despite their expressions that they are willing to help.<sup>3</sup> We are concerned that these workers are not being employed in the highly labor-intensive effort to help Merrimack Valley recover from the explosions. These locked-out National Grid workers live in the area, so their involvement would be more cost effective to the recovery effort than would bringing in workers from out of state, who require room and board. In addition, these workers are highly skilled and maintain up-to-date certifications of the exact types that are desperately needed for the recovery work.

On September 24, we wrote to Eversource Energy and Columbia Gas of Massachusetts to urge them to insist that their contractors hire locked-out National Grid workers to help with recovery efforts, but, to my knowledge, Columbia Gas has not done so. We write today to urge you to act in the interests of the Massachusetts communities affected by this tragedy and take any and all steps necessary to ensure the locked-out National Grid workers are involved in the Merrimack Valley recovery efforts, including by encouraging Columbia Gas and its contractors to hire them. In this time of urgent need for the Commonwealth, we must do everything possible to advance the welfare of the communities in which our fellow citizens of Massachusetts live and work.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

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<sup>1</sup> WBUR, "Amid Lockout, Mass. AG Calls for Probe Into National Grid Over Safety Concerns, Zeninor Enwemeka, September 11, 2018, <http://www.wbur.org/bostonmix/2018/09/11/national-grid-lockout-ag-investigation>.

<sup>2</sup> WCVB 5, "National Grid facing new state scrutiny over gas safety following Woburn incident," October 9, 2018, <https://www.wcvb.com/article/gas-system-over-pressurized-in-part-of-woburn-police-say/23650501>.

<sup>3</sup> The Salem News, "Locked-out workers offer help in gas explosions," Jim Sullivan, September 17, 2018, [http://www.salemnews.com/news/local\\_news/locked-out-workers-offer-help-in-gas-explosions/article\\_650bb7a6-4c14-5263-909b-bc1abddba91a.html](http://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/locked-out-workers-offer-help-in-gas-explosions/article_650bb7a6-4c14-5263-909b-bc1abddba91a.html).