

STATE OF NEW YORK

6327

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

March 15, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. PAULIN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

AN ACT to amend the general business law, in relation to requiring broadband service providers to offer low-income households a discount on their broadband service bill

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The general business law is amended by adding a new section 399-zzzzz to read as follows:

§ 399-zzzzz. Broadband service discount for low-income households. 1. For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Broadband service" shall mean a mass-market retail service that provides the capability to transmit data to and receive data from all, or substantially all, internet endpoints, including any capabilities that are incidental to and enable the operation of the communications service provided by a wireline, fixed wireless or satellite service provider, but shall not include dial-up service.

(b) "Broadband service provider" shall mean any person, business, corporation, or their agents, providing or seeking to provide broadband service in the state of New York.

(c) "Eligible household" shall mean a household:

(i) that is eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch authorized by the national school lunch program; or

(ii) with an annual gross household income that is not in excess of one hundred thirty-five percent of the federal poverty guidelines, as updated periodically in the federal register by the United States department of health and human services pursuant to subsection (2) of section 9902 of title 42 of the United States code.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 (d) "Standard rate" shall mean the monthly retail rate, inclusive of
2 any reoccurring taxes and fees, for the applicable tier of broadband
3 service.

4 2. Every broadband service provider shall, no later than sixty days
5 after the effective date of this section, offer a monthly discount to an
6 eligible household applied to the actual amount charged to such house-
7 hold for the standard rate of a broadband service plan, whether stand-
8 alone or bundled, and associated equipment, in the amount of fifty
9 dollars, or if the standard rate of the broadband service plan is less
10 than fifty dollars, in the amount of such rate. Such discount required
11 by this section shall not apply to a provider's existing low-income or
12 COVID-19 program.

13 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule, or regulation,
14 any broadband service provider that participates in the Emergency Broad-
15 band Benefit program administered by the federal communications commis-
16 sion shall be considered in compliance with the requirements of this
17 section and any rule or regulation adopted to effectuate the require-
18 ments of this section, after providing evidence of such participation in
19 the Emergency Broadband Benefit program to the public service commission
20 and the attorney general.

21 4. Every broadband service provider shall make all commercially
22 reasonable efforts to promote and advertise the availability of the
23 discount required by this section including, but not limited to, the
24 prominent display of, and enrollment procedures for, such service on its
25 website and in any written and commercial promotional materials devel-
26 oped to inform consumers who may be eligible for the discount pursuant
27 to this section.

28 5. The public service commission shall promulgate rules and regu-
29 lations to effectuate the provisions of this section, and may issue a
30 waiver exempting any broadband service provider otherwise subject to the
31 requirements of this section or modify the requirements and/or obli-
32 gations of this section as it applies to any broadband service provider
33 otherwise subject to the requirements of this section:

34 (a) where compliance with the requirements of this section would cause
35 undue hardship to the broadband service provider, and it would be in the
36 public interest to grant such waiver; or

37 (b) if such person, business, corporation, or their agent, is not
38 eligible to participate in the Emergency Broadband Benefit program
39 administered by the federal communications commission.

40 6. Every person, business, corporation, or their agents, providing or
41 seeking to provide broadband service in the state of New York shall
42 submit to the department of public service, no later than November
43 fifteenth of the year this section takes effect, and annually thereaft-
44 er, a compliance report setting forth: (a) the number of consumers
45 availing themselves of the discount required by this section; (b) a
46 description of the procedures being used to verify the eligibility of
47 customers receiving such discount; (c) a description and samples of the
48 advertising or marketing efforts undertaken to advertise or promote such
49 discount; (d) a description of all retail rate products, including pric-
50 ing, offered by such person, business, corporation, or their agents; (e)
51 a description, including speed and price, of all broadband products
52 offered in the state of New York; and (f) such other information as the
53 department of public service may require.

54 7. Whenever there shall be a violation of this section, an application
55 may be made by the attorney general in the name of the people of the
56 state of New York to a court or justice having jurisdiction by a special

1 proceeding to issue an injunction, and upon notice to the defendant of
2 not less than five days, to enjoin and restrain the continuance of such
3 violation; and if it shall appear to the satisfaction of the court or
4 justice that the defendant has, in fact, violated this section, an
5 injunction may be issued by the court or justice, enjoining and
6 restraining any further violations, without requiring proof that any
7 person has, in fact, been injured or damaged thereby. In any such
8 proceeding, the court may make allowances to the attorney general as
9 provided in paragraph six of subdivision (a) of section eighty-three
10 hundred three of the civil practice law and rules, and direct restitu-
11 tion. Whenever the court shall determine that a violation of this
12 section has occurred, the court may impose a civil penalty of not more
13 than one thousand dollars per violation. In connection with any such
14 proposed application, the attorney general is authorized to take proof
15 and make a determination of the relevant facts and to issue subpoenas in
16 accordance with the civil practice law and rules.

17 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.