

STATE OF NEW YORK

4815

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 12, 2021

Introduced by Sen. SALAZAR -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Energy and Telecommunications

AN ACT to amend the public service law and the general business law, in relation to authorizing survivors of domestic violence to be removed from phone, cable, and satellite tv contracts

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

1 Section 1. Subdivisions 7 and 8 of section 91 of the public service
2 law, subdivision 7 as added by chapter 202 of the laws of 2013 and
3 subdivision 8 as added by chapter 186 of the laws of 2019, are amended
4 and a new subdivision 13 is added to read as follows:

5 7. Every telephone corporation, as defined in this chapter shall, at
6 its option: (a) allow a customer to use a modified or alternative name
7 for a directory listing or (b) waive the otherwise applicable charges
8 for a non-published telephone listing, where the customer requests
9 protection of its identity in connection with the customer's purchase of
10 telephone service and the customer is a victim of domestic violence, as
11 defined in section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law,
12 and for whose benefit any order of protection, other than a temporary
13 order of protection, has been issued by a court of competent jurisdiction.
14 This waiver of charges shall be for the duration of the applicable,
15 non-temporary, order. Any non-published listings provided in this
16 subdivision shall conform to all the same requirements of other non-
17 published listings. A customer requesting such an accommodation shall
18 provide [~~a copy of the order of protection to the applicable telephone~~
19 ~~corporation~~] an attestation in writing of their eligibility as a victim
20 of domestic violence. Such telephone corporation may not require such
21 customer to disclose confidential information or details relating to
22 such customer's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition
23 of implementing such accommodation. Any customer requesting an accommo-

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

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1 dation pursuant to this subdivision may also request and shall be
2 provided, at no cost to the customer, a new telephone number within
3 fifteen days from the request for such accommodation. Such telephone
4 corporation shall dispose of information submitted by such customer no
5 later than thirty days after receiving such information in a manner as
6 to maintain confidentiality of such information.

7 8. Every telephone corporation, as defined in this chapter, shall
8 allow a person who is under contract including, but not limited to, a
9 multi-year contract or bundle contract with such telephone corporation,
10 to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge when such
11 person is a victim of domestic violence and [~~requests to opt-out in~~
12 ~~writing. Such victim of domestic violence shall provide to such tele-~~
13 ~~phone corporation any of the following documents, which shall relate to~~
14 ~~such domestic violence, within six months of the document's issuance:~~
15 ~~(a) a valid domestic violence incident report form, as such term is~~
16 ~~defined in subdivision fifteen of section eight hundred thirty seven of~~
17 ~~the executive law; (b) a valid police report; (c) a valid order of~~
18 ~~protection; (d) a signed affidavit from a licensed medical or mental~~
19 ~~health care provider, employee of a court acting within the scope of his~~
20 ~~or her employment, social worker, a rape crisis counselor, as defined in~~
21 ~~section forty five hundred ten of the civil practice law and rules, or~~
22 ~~advocate acting on behalf of an agency that assists domestic violence~~
23 ~~victims]~~ provides an attestation in writing of their eligibility as a
24 victim of domestic violence. Such telephone corporation may not require
25 such person to disclose confidential information or details relating to
26 such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of
27 permitting such person to opt-out of such contract. Further, such tele-
28 phone corporation may not make release from such contract contingent on:
29 (a) maintaining contractual or billing responsibility of a separated
30 line with the provider; (b) approval of separation by the primary
31 account holder, if the primary account holder is not the person making
32 such request; (c) a prohibition on limitation on number portability or a
33 request to change phone numbers; or (d) a prohibition or limitation on
34 the separation of lines as a result of arrears accrued by the account.
35 Such telephone corporation shall release such person from such contract
36 no later than seven days after receiving such opt-out request. Such
37 telephone corporation shall dispose of information submitted by such
38 person no later than thirty days after receiving such information in a
39 manner as to maintain confidentiality of such information. A claim for
40 opting-out of such contract without charge shall be made in good faith.
41 Such telephone corporation shall waive the otherwise applicable [~~charg-~~
42 ~~es~~] fee, penalty or charge for such person requesting to opt-out of such
43 contract.

44 13. Every telephone corporation, as defined in this chapter, shall
45 make information about the options and process described in subdivision
46 eight of this section readily available to consumers on the website and
47 any mobile application of the provider, in physical stores, and in other
48 forms of public-facing consumer communication.

49 § 2. Section 399-yy of the general business law, as amended by chap-
50 ter 186 of the laws of 2019, is amended to read as follows:

51 § 399-yy. Cable television company providing telephone services. 1.
52 Every cable television company, as defined in section two hundred twelve
53 of the public service law, that provides telephone service to customers
54 in New York shall, at its option: a. allow a customer without fee,
55 penalty or charge to use a modified or alternative name for a directory
56 listing or b. waive the otherwise applicable charges for a non-published

1 telephone listing, where the customer requests protection of its identi-
2 ty in connection with the customer's purchase of telephone service and
3 the customer is a victim of domestic violence, as defined in section
4 four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law[, ~~and for whose~~
5 ~~benefit any order of protection, other than a temporary order of~~
6 ~~protection, has been issued by a court of competent jurisdiction. This~~
7 ~~waiver of charges shall be for the duration of the applicable, non-tem-~~
8 ~~porary, order~~]. Any non-published listings provided in this section
9 shall conform to all the same requirements of other non-published list-
10 ings. A customer requesting such an accommodation shall provide [~~a copy~~
11 ~~of the order of protection to the applicable cable television company~~]
12 an attestation in writing of their eligibility as a victim of domestic
13 violence. Such cable television company may not require such customer to
14 disclose confidential information or details relating to such customer's
15 status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of implementing
16 such accommodation. Any customer requesting an accommodation pursuant
17 to this section may also request and shall be provided, at no cost to
18 the customer, a new telephone number within fifteen days from the
19 request for such accommodation. Such cable television company shall
20 dispose of information submitted by such customer no later than thirty
21 days after receiving such information in a manner as to maintain confi-
22 dentality of such information.

23 2. Every cable television company, as defined in section two hundred
24 twelve of the public service law, that provides television and/or tele-
25 phone service to customers in New York under contract including, but not
26 limited to a multi-year contract or bundled contract with such cable
27 television company, shall allow a person to opt-out of such contract
28 without fee, penalty or charge when such person is a victim of domestic
29 violence and [~~request to opt-out in writing. Such victim of domestic~~
30 ~~violence shall provide to such cable television company any of the~~
31 ~~following documents, which shall relate to such domestic violence, with-~~
32 ~~in six months of the document's issuance: (a) a valid domestic violence~~
33 ~~incident report form, as such term is defined in subdivision fifteen of~~
34 ~~section eight hundred thirty-seven of the executive law; (b) a valid~~
35 ~~police report; (c) a valid order of protection; (d) a signed affidavit~~
36 ~~from a licensed medical or mental health care provider, employee of a~~
37 ~~court acting within the scope of his or her employment, social worker, a~~
38 ~~rape crisis counselor, as defined in section forty-five hundred ten of~~
39 ~~the civil practice law and rules, or advocate acting on behalf of an~~
40 ~~agency that assists domestic violence victims] provides an attestation
41 in writing of their eligibility as a victim of domestic violence. Such
42 cable television company may not require such person to disclose confi-
43 dential information or details relating to such person's status as a
44 victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person to
45 opt-out of such contract. Further, such cable television company may not
46 make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining contrac-
47 tual or billing responsibility of a separated account with the provid-
48 er; (b) approval of separation by the primary account holder, if the
49 primary account holder is not the person making such request; or (c) a
50 prohibition or limitation on the separation as a result of arrears
51 accrued by the account. Such cable television company shall release such
52 person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving such
53 opt-out request. Such cable television company shall dispose of informa-
54 tion submitted by such person no later than thirty days after receiving
55 such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such
56 information. A claim for opting-out of such contract without charge~~

1 shall be made in good faith. Such cable television company shall waive
2 the otherwise applicable fee, penalty, or charges for such person
3 requesting to opt-out of such contract. Every cable television company
4 shall make information about the options and process described in this
5 section readily available to consumers on the website and any mobile
6 application of the provider, in physical stores, and in other forms of
7 public-facing consumer communication.

8 § 3. Subdivision 1 of section 399-yyy of the general business law, as
9 added by chapter 186 of the laws of 2019, is amended to read as follows:

10 1. Every direct broadcast satellite service provider, as defined in
11 this section, that provides television and/or telephone services to
12 customers in New York shall allow a person who is under contract includ-
13 ing, but not limited to a multi-year contract or bundled contract with
14 such satellite television company, to opt-out of such contract without
15 fee, penalty or charge when such a person is a victim of domestic
16 violence and ~~[requests to opt-out in writing. Such victim of domestic~~
17 ~~violence shall provide to such satellite television company any of the~~
18 ~~following documents, which shall relate to such domestic violence, with-~~
19 ~~in six months of the document's issuance: (a) a valid domestic violence~~
20 ~~incident report form, as such term is defined in subdivision fifteen of~~
21 ~~section eight hundred thirty seven of the executive law; (b) a valid~~
22 ~~police report; (c) a valid order of protection; (d) a signed affidavit~~
23 ~~from a licensed medical or mental health care provider, employee of a~~
24 ~~court acting within the scope of his or her employment, social worker, a~~
25 ~~rape crisis counselor, as defined in section forty five hundred ten of~~
26 ~~the civil practice law and rules, or advocate acting on behalf of an~~
27 ~~agency that assists domestic violence victims.]~~ provides an attestation
28 in writing of their eligibility as a victim of domestic violence. Such
29 satellite television company may not require such person to disclose
30 confidential information or details relating to such person's status as
31 a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person
32 to opt-out of such contract. Further, such satellite television company
33 may not make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining
34 contractual or billing responsibility of a separated account with the
35 provider; (b) approval of separation by the primary account holder, if
36 the primary account holder is not the person making such request; or (c)
37 a prohibition or limitation on the separation as a result of arrears
38 accrued by the account. Such satellite television company shall release
39 such person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving
40 such opt-out request. Such satellite television company shall dispose of
41 information submitted by such person no later than 30 days after receiv-
42 ing such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such
43 information. A claim for opting-out of such contract without charge
44 shall be made in good faith. Such satellite television company shall
45 waive the otherwise applicable ~~[charges]~~ fee, penalty, or charge for
46 such person requesting to opt-out of such contract. Every satellite
47 television company shall make information about the options and process
48 described in this section readily available to consumers on the website
49 and any mobile application of the provider, in physical stores, and in
50 other forms of public-facing consumer communication.

51 § 4. This act shall take effect immediately.