

STATE OF NEW YORK

1525

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 10, 2017

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

AN ACT to direct the public service commission to undertake a study of consumer protections adopted by electric corporations and utilities

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

1 Section 1. The New York State public service commission shall under-
2 take an immediate study of consumer protections adopted by electric
3 corporations and municipalities ("utilities") pursuant to article 2 of
4 the public service law and provide a report to the governor, the tempo-
5 rary president of the senate, the speaker of the assembly, the chair of
6 the senate committee on energy and telecommunications and the chair of
7 the assembly committee on energy. Such report shall include an analysis
8 of the effectiveness of current utility procedures for notifying custom-
9 ers in arrears on utility charges of how they may avoid termination of
10 electric, gas or steam service, including the availability of deferred
11 payment agreements. In addition, such report shall review the adequacy
12 of the commission's assistance to customers negotiating deferred payment
13 agreements with utilities in lieu of disconnection of service including
14 the number of deferred payment plans by utility service territory; the
15 number of incidences, if any, in which utilities have required more than
16 the lawfully allowed level of down payments or deferred payments from
17 customers seeking to connect service or avoid disconnection; the effec-
18 tiveness and availability of the commission's shutoff hotline in receiv-
19 ing calls from customers facing termination of electric, gas and steam
20 service; the call volume to such hotline in each utility service terri-
21 tory; the monthly number of electric and natural gas customers who
22 previously received utility bill assistance from the Home Energy Assist-
23 ance Program whose service was terminated for bill collection purposes
24 in each utility service area in the previous calendar year, provided

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

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1 further that the commission shall require each utility provide such
2 information while maintaining customer confidentiality; and any proposed
3 legislative remedies necessary to increase customer awareness of such
4 hotline. The report shall be made available to the public on the commis-
5 sion's website.

6 § 2. The New York State public service commission shall seek comments
7 from utilities, municipalities, consumer advocates and the public and
8 may include in the report recommendations to improve existing consumer
9 protection policies.

10 § 3. If the study pursuant to section one of this act is not received
11 by November 15, 2018, the commission shall institute a moratorium
12 preventing utility corporations from terminating electric, gas or steam
13 service to any residential customer in arrears with whom it has entered
14 into an agreement for the provision of such services. The moratorium
15 shall last for the period beginning December 1, 2018 and ending on March
16 31, 2019. Nothing in this act shall be construed to prevent a utility
17 corporation from charging customers for electric, gas or steam service
18 or from offering a deferred payment agreement for the period beginning
19 December 1, 2018 and ending on March 31, 2019.

20 § 4. This act shall take effect immediately.