

# STATE OF NEW YORK

1204

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 10, 2023

Introduced by Sen. PARKER -- 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, in relation to establishing discount programs for low-income senior citizens and individuals with a disability

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

Section 1. The public service law is amended by adding a new section 66-u to read as follows:

§ 66-u. Utility discount program. 1. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the commission is authorized and directed to require a gas corporation, electric corporation or municipality to establish a discount program for low-income senior citizens and individuals with a disability no later than ninety days after the effective date of this section. Such program shall offer a yearly benefit to low-income senior citizens and individuals with a disability in the form of a ten percent discount on utility bills. The fiscal impact of such program shall not be borne by customers and shall not be added to bills rendered by a gas corporation, electric corporation or municipality to customers.

(b) A gas corporation, electric corporation or municipality which offers such discount program shall conspicuously advertise the availability and amount of such discount on the website of such gas corporation, electric corporation or municipality. The availability and amount of such discount shall also be conspicuously advertised on the accessibility page of the website of such gas corporation, electric corporation or municipality.

2. For the purposes of this section:

(a) "individuals with a disability" shall mean a primary named utility service, water service, or telephone service account holder (i) with a disability, as defined in subdivision twenty-one of section two hundred

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

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1 ninety-two of the executive law; and (ii) who has had a total household  
2 income of less than fifty thousand dollars for the most recent two  
3 consecutive income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as veri-  
4 fied by the department of taxation and finance; and (iii) who is  
5 currently receiving (A) social security disability insurance (SSDI), (B)  
6 supplemental security income (SSI) benefits under the federal social  
7 security act, (C) disability pension or disability compensation benefits  
8 provided by the United States department of veterans affairs, (D) disa-  
9 bility pension or disability compensation benefits provided by the  
10 United States Postal Service, or (E) those previously eligible by virtue  
11 of receiving disability benefits under the supplemental security income  
12 program or the social security disability program and currently receiv-  
13 ing medical assistance benefits based on determination of disability as  
14 provided in section three hundred sixty-six of the social services law;  
15 and

16 (b) "low-income senior citizen" shall mean a primary named utility  
17 service, water service, or telephone service accountholder who (i) is at  
18 least sixty-five years of age; and (ii) either (A) has had a total  
19 household income of less than fifty thousand dollars for two consecutive  
20 income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as verified by the  
21 department of taxation and finance; or (B) is annually eligible to  
22 receive assistance under the emergency rental assistance program (ERAP)  
23 or the home energy assistance program (HEAP) and provides proof of  
24 eligibility from the agency administering ERAP or HEAP.

25 § 2. The public service law is amended by adding a new section 89-q to  
26 read as follows:

27 § 89-q. Water discount program. 1. (a) Notwithstanding any other  
28 provision of law, the commission is authorized and directed to require  
29 waterworks corporations and municipal water systems to establish a  
30 discount program for low-income senior citizens and individuals with a  
31 disability no later than ninety days after the effective date of this  
32 section. Such program shall offer a yearly benefit to low-income senior  
33 citizens and individuals with a disability in the form of a ten percent  
34 discount on water utility bills. The fiscal impact of such program shall  
35 not be borne by customers and shall not be added to bills rendered by a  
36 waterworks corporation or municipal water system to customers.

37 (b) A waterworks corporation or municipal water system which offers  
38 such discount program shall conspicuously advertise the availability and  
39 amount of such discount on the website of such waterworks corporations  
40 or municipal water system. The availability and amount of such discount  
41 shall also be conspicuously advertised on the accessibility page of the  
42 website of such waterworks corporation or municipal water system.

43 2. For the purposes of this section:

44 (a) "individuals with a disability" shall mean a primary named utility  
45 service, water service, or telephone service accountholder (i) with a  
46 disability, as defined in subdivision twenty-one of section two hundred  
47 ninety-two of the executive law; and (ii) who has had a total household  
48 income of less than fifty thousand dollars for the most recent two  
49 consecutive income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as veri-  
50 fied by the department of taxation and finance; and (iii) who is  
51 currently receiving (A) social security disability insurance (SSDI), (B)  
52 supplemental security income (SSI) benefits under the federal social  
53 security act, (C) disability pension or disability compensation benefits  
54 provided by the United States department of veterans affairs, (D) disa-  
55 bility pension or disability compensation benefits provided by the  
56 United States Postal Service, or (E) those previously eligible by virtue

1 of receiving disability benefits under the supplemental security income  
2 program or the social security disability program and currently receiv-  
3 ing medical assistance benefits based on determination of disability as  
4 provided in section three hundred sixty-six of the social services law;  
5 and

6 (b) "low-income senior citizen" shall mean a primary named utility  
7 service, water service, or telephone service accountholder who (i) is at  
8 least sixty-five years of age; and (ii) either (A) has had a total  
9 household income of less than fifty thousand dollars for two consecutive  
10 income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as verified by the  
11 department of taxation and finance; or (B) is annually eligible to  
12 receive assistance under the emergency rental assistance program (ERAP)  
13 or the home energy assistance program (HEAP) and provides proof of  
14 eligibility from the agency administering ERAP or HEAP.

15 § 3. The public service law is amended by adding a new section 91-b to  
16 read as follows:

17 § 91-b. Telephone discount program. 1. (a) Notwithstanding any other  
18 provision of law, the commission is authorized and directed to require a  
19 telephone corporation to establish a discount program for low-income  
20 senior citizens and individuals with a disability no later than ninety  
21 days after the effective date of this section. Such program shall offer  
22 a yearly benefit to low-income senior citizens and individuals with a  
23 disability in the form of a ten percent discount on telephone bills. The  
24 fiscal impact of such program shall not be borne by customers and shall  
25 not be added to bills rendered by a telephone corporation to customers.

26 (b) A telephone corporation which offers such discount program shall  
27 conspicuously advertise the availability and amount of such discount on  
28 the website of such telephone corporation. The availability and amount  
29 of such discount shall also be conspicuously advertised on the accessi-  
30 bility page of the website of such telephone corporation.

31 (c) Participation in the federal government's lifeline or affordable  
32 connectivity program, or any successor program the commission shall deem  
33 sufficient, shall satisfy the telephone corporation's obligation to  
34 establish a discount program under paragraph (a) of this subdivision,  
35 unless the commission deems it insufficient to satisfy such require-  
36 ments.

37 (d) Before applying a discount under paragraph (a) of this subdivi-  
38 sion, a telephone corporation may require proof of eligibility from the  
39 primary named accountholder for the calendar year in which the discount  
40 is sought.

41 2. For the purposes of this section:

42 (a) "individuals with a disability" shall mean a primary named utility  
43 service, water service, or telephone service accountholder (i) with a  
44 disability, as defined in subdivision twenty-one of section two hundred  
45 ninety-two of the executive law; and (ii) who has had a total household  
46 income of less than fifty thousand dollars for the most recent two  
47 consecutive income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as veri-  
48 fied by the department of taxation and finance; and (iii) who is  
49 currently receiving (A) social security disability insurance (SSDI), (B)  
50 supplemental security income (SSI) benefits under the federal social  
51 security act, (C) disability pension or disability compensation benefits  
52 provided by the United States department of veterans affairs, (D) disa-  
53 bility pension or disability compensation benefits provided by the  
54 United States Postal Service, or (E) those previously eligible by virtue  
55 of receiving disability benefits under the supplemental security income  
56 program or the social security disability program and currently receiv-

1 ing medical assistance benefits based on determination of disability as  
2 provided in section three hundred sixty-six of the social services law;  
3 and

4 (b) "low-income senior citizen" shall mean a primary named telephone  
5 service account holder who (i) is at least sixty-five years of age; and  
6 (ii) either (A) has had a total household income of less than fifty  
7 thousand dollars for two consecutive income tax years beginning in two  
8 thousand twenty, as verified by the department of taxation and finance;  
9 or (B) is annually eligible to receive assistance under the emergency  
10 rental assistance program (ERAP) or the home energy assistance program  
11 (HEAP) and provides proof of eligibility from the agency administering  
12 ERAP or HEAP.

13 § 4. The public service law is amended by adding a new section 224-d  
14 to read as follows:

15 § 224-d. Cable discount program. 1. (a) Notwithstanding any other  
16 provision of law, the commission is authorized and directed to require a  
17 telephone corporation, as defined in subdivision seventeen of section  
18 two of this chapter, and a cable television company, as defined in  
19 section two hundred twelve of this article, that provides cable service  
20 to customers in New York, to establish a discount program for low-income  
21 senior citizens and individuals with a disability no later than ninety  
22 days after the effective date of this section. Such program shall offer  
23 a yearly benefit to low-income senior citizens and individuals with a  
24 disability in the form of a ten percent discount on cable bills. The  
25 fiscal impact of such program shall not be borne by customers and shall  
26 not be added to bills rendered by a telephone corporation or cable tele-  
27 vision company to customers.

28 (b) A telephone corporation or cable television company which offers  
29 such discount program shall conspicuously advertise the availability and  
30 amount of such discount on the website of such telephone corporation or  
31 cable television company. The availability and amount of such discount  
32 shall also be conspicuously advertised on the accessibility page of the  
33 website of such telephone corporation or cable television company.

34 (c) Participation in the federal government's lifeline or affordable  
35 connectivity program, or any successor program the commission shall deem  
36 sufficient, shall satisfy the telephone corporation's or cable tele-  
37 vision company's obligation to establish a discount program under para-  
38 graph (a) of this subdivision, unless the commission deems it insuffi-  
39 cient to satisfy such requirements.

40 (d) Before applying a discount under paragraph (a) of this subdivi-  
41 sion, a telephone corporation or cable television company may require  
42 proof of eligibility from the primary named account holder for the calen-  
43 dar year in which the discount is sought.

44 2. For the purposes of this section:

45 (a) "individuals with a disability" shall mean a primary named utility  
46 service, water service, or telephone service account holder (i) with a  
47 disability, as defined in subdivision twenty-one of section two hundred  
48 ninety-two of the executive law; and (ii) who has had a total household  
49 income of less than fifty thousand dollars for the most recent two  
50 consecutive income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as veri-  
51 fied by the department of taxation and finance; and (iii) who is  
52 currently receiving (A) social security disability insurance (SSDI), (B)  
53 supplemental security income (SSI) benefits under the federal social  
54 security act, (C) disability pension or disability compensation benefits  
55 provided by the United States department of veterans affairs, (D) disa-  
56 bility pension or disability compensation benefits provided by the

1 United States Postal Service, or (E) those previously eligible by virtue  
2 of receiving disability benefits under the supplemental security income  
3 program or the social security disability program and currently receiv-  
4 ing medical assistance benefits based on determination of disability as  
5 provided in section three hundred sixty-six of the social services law;  
6 and

7 (b) "low-income senior citizen" shall mean a primary named utility  
8 service, water service, or telephone service accountholder who (i) is at  
9 least sixty-five years of age; and (ii) either (A) has had a total  
10 household income of less than fifty thousand dollars for two consecutive  
11 income tax years beginning in two thousand twenty, as verified by the  
12 department of taxation and finance; or (B) is annually eligible to  
13 receive assistance under the emergency rental assistance program (ERAP)  
14 or the home energy assistance program (HEAP) and provides proof of  
15 eligibility from the agency administering ERAP or HEAP.

16 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.