STATE OF NEW YORK

7198

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

May 18, 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 and the general business law, in relation to releasing victims of domestic violence from certain contracts

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

Section 1. Subdivision 1 of section 48-a of the public service law, as amended by chapter 42 of the laws of 2023, is amended to read as follows:

1. Every utility corporation shall allow a person who is under a shared contract with such utility corporation to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge when such person is a victim of domestic violence and provides an attestation in writing that they no longer wish to be a party to such contract due to their status as a victim of domestic violence. **Such utility corporation shall permit one or more individuals who are under a shared contract to opt-out of such contract without a fee, penalty or charge, regardless of how many persons previously made such opt-out requests or when, during the term of such shared contract, such request was made to such utility corporation.** Such utility corporation may not require such person to disclose confidential information or details relating to such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person to opt-out of such contract. **If the person making such request is the primary account holder on such shared contract, such utility corporation shall be prohibited from transferring any contractual or billing responsibility of such shared contract to any other account holders on such shared contract.** Further, such utility corporation may not make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining contractual or billing responsibility of a separated account with the provider; (b) approval of

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

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separation by the primary account holder, if the primary account holder is not the person making such request; or (c) a prohibition or limitation on the separation as a result of arrears accrued by the account. **Nor shall such utility corporation prohibit a person who had made an opt-out request from entering into a new contract with such utility corporation.** Such utility corporation shall release such person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving such opt-out request. Such utility corporation shall dispose of information submitted by such person no later than thirty days after receiving such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such information.

§ 2. Subdivision 1 of section 399-cccc of the general business law, as amended by chapter 42 of the laws of 2023, is amended to read as follows:

1. Every provider of wireless telephone service, as defined in paragraph (b) of subdivision one of section twelve hundred twenty-five-c of the vehicle and traffic law, shall allow a person who is under a shared phone plan contract with such provider to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge when such person is a victim of domestic violence and provides an attestation in writing that they no longer wish to be a party to such contract due to their status as a victim of domestic violence. **Such provider of wireless telephone service shall permit one or more individuals who are under a shared contract to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge, regardless of how many persons previously made such opt-out requests or when, during the term of such shared contract, such request was made to such provider of wireless telephone service.** Such provider of wireless telephone service may not require such person to disclose confidential information or details relating to such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person to opt-out of such contract. **If the person making such request is the primary account holder on such shared contract, such provider of wireless telephone service shall be prohibited from transferring any contractual or billing responsibility of such shared contract to any other account holders on such shared contract.** Further, such provider of wireless telephone service may not make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining contractual or billing responsibility of a separated account with the provider; (b) approval of separation by the primary account holder, if the primary account holder is not the person making such request; (c) a prohibition or limitation on number portability or a request to change phone numbers; or (d) a prohibition or limitation on the separation as a result of arrears accrued by the account. **Nor shall such provider of wireless telephone service prohibit a person who has made an opt-out request from entering into a new contract with such wireless telephone service.** Such provider of wireless telephone service shall release such person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving such opt-out request. Such provider of wireless telephone service shall dispose of information submitted by such person no later than thirty days after receiving such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such information.

§ 3. Subdivision 8 of section 91 of the public service law, as amended by chapter 42 of the laws of 2023, is amended to read as follows:

8. Every telephone corporation, as defined in this chapter, shall allow a person who is under contract including, but not limited to, a multi-year contract or bundle contract with such telephone corporation, to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge when such person is a victim of domestic violence and provides an attestation in

writing that they no longer wish to be a party to such contract due to their status as a victim of domestic violence. **Such telephone corporation shall permit one or more individuals who are under a shared contract to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge, regardless of how many persons previously made such opt-out request or when, during the term of such shared contract, such request was made to such telephone corporation.** Such telephone corporation may not require such person to disclose confidential information or details relating to such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person to opt-out of such contract. **If the person making such request is the primary account holder on such shared contract, such telephone corporation shall be prohibited from transferring any contractual or billing responsibility of such shared contract to any other account holders on such shared contract.** Further, such telephone corporation may not make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining contractual or billing responsibility of a separated line with the provider; (b) approval of separation by the primary account holder, if the primary account holder is not the person making such request; (c) a prohibition or limitation on number portability or a request to change phone numbers; or (d) a prohibition or limitation on the separation of lines as a result of arrears accrued by the account. **Nor shall such telephone corporation prohibit a person who has made an opt-out request from entering into a new contract with such telephone corporation.** Such telephone corporation shall release such person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving such opt-out request. Such telephone corporation shall dispose of information submitted by such person no later than thirty days after receiving such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such information. A claim for opting-out of such contract without charge shall be made in good faith. Such telephone corporation shall waive the otherwise applicable fee, penalty or charge for such person requesting to opt-out of such contract.

§ 4. Subdivision 2 of section 399-yy of the general business law, as amended by chapter 42 of the laws of 2023, is amended to read as follows:

2. Every cable television company, as defined in section two hundred twelve of the public service law, that provides television and/or telephone service to customers in New York under contract including, but not limited to a multi-year contract or bundled contract with such cable television company, shall allow a person to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge when such person is a victim of domestic violence and provides an attestation in writing that they no longer wish to be a party to such contract due to their status as a victim of domestic violence. **Such cable television company shall permit one or more individuals who are under a shared contract to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge, regardless of how many persons previously made such opt-out request or when, during the term of such shared contract, such request was made to such cable television company.** Such cable television company may not require such person to disclose confidential information or details relating to such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person to opt-out of such contract. **If the person making such request is the primary account holder on such shared contract, such cable television company shall be prohibited from transferring any contractual or billing responsibility of such shared contract to any other account holders on such shared contract.** Further, such cable television company may not make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining contrac-

tual or billing responsibility of a separated account with the provider; (b) approval of separation by the primary account holder, if the primary account holder is not the person making such request; or (c) a prohibition or limitation on the separation as a result of arrears accrued by the account. **Nor shall such cable television company prohibit a person who has made an opt-out request from entering into a new contract with such cable television company.** Such cable television company shall release such person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving such opt-out request. Such cable television company shall dispose of information submitted by such person no later than thirty days after receiving such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such information. A claim for opting-out of such contract without charge shall be made in good faith. Such cable television company shall waive the otherwise applicable fee, penalty or charge for such person requesting to opt-out of such contract. Every cable television company shall make information about the options and process described in this section readily available to consumers on the website and any mobile application of the provider, in physical stores, and in other forms of public-facing consumer communication.

§ 5. Subdivision 1 of section 399-yyy of the general business law, as amended by chapter 42 of the laws of 2023, is amended to read as follows:

1. Every direct broadcast satellite service provider, as defined in this section, that provides television and/or telephone services to customers in New York shall allow a person who is under contract including, but not limited to a multi-year contract or bundled contract with such satellite television company, to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge when such a person is a victim of domestic violence and provides an attestation in writing that they no longer wish to be a party to such contract due to their status as a victim of domestic violence. **Such satellite television company shall permit one or more individuals who are under a shared contract to opt-out of such contract without fee, penalty or charge, regardless of how many persons previously made such opt-out request or when, during the term of such shared contract, such request was made to such satellite television company.** Such satellite television company may not require such person to disclose confidential information or details relating to such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, as a condition of permitting such person to opt-out of such contract. **If the person making such request is the primary account holder on such shared contract, such satellite television company shall be prohibited from transferring any contractual or billing responsibility of such shared contract to any other account holders on such shared contract.** Further, such satellite television company may not make release from such contract contingent on: (a) maintaining contractual or billing responsibility of a separated account with the provider; (b) approval of separation by the primary account holder, if the primary account holder is not the person making such request; or (c) a prohibition or limitation on the separation as a result of arrears accrued by the account. **Nor shall such satellite television company prohibit a person who has made an opt-out request from entering into a new contract with such satellite television company.** Such satellite television company shall release such person from such contract no later than seven days after receiving such opt-out request. Such satellite television company shall dispose of information submitted by such person no later than thirty days after receiving such information in a manner as to maintain confidentiality of such information. A

claim for opting-out of such contract without charge shall be made in good faith. Such satellite television company shall waive the otherwise applicable fee, penalty or charge for such person requesting to opt-out of such contract. Every satellite television company shall make information about the options and process described in this section readily available to consumers on the website and any mobile application of the provider, in physical stores, and in other forms of public-facing consumer communication.

§ 6. This act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as chapter 42 of the laws of 2023, takes effect.