STATE OF NEW YORK

8683

IN SENATE

January 7, 2026

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 social services law, in relation to establishing a medical cost-of-living adjustment and utility bill relief for senior citizens based on documented medical necessity

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

Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature finds that senior citizens face a disproportionate financial burden from the rising cost of life-sustaining medications and chronic medical treatment. These medical expenses directly impact on a senior's ability to afford basic household necessities, including gas and electric service, and are not adequately reflected in current cost-of-living adjustment calculations. The legislature further finds that protecting medically vulnerable seniors from utility insecurity is consistent with the purposes of the Home Energy Fair Practices Act, the Energy Affordability Policy, and existing low-income energy assistance programs. It is therefore the intent of the legislature to modernize cost-of-living adjustments by incorporating documented medical necessities and to provide graduated utility bill relief tied to essential medical expenses that affect quality of life.

§ 2. The public service law is amended by adding a new section 66-x to read as follows:

§ 66-x. Medical cost-of-living adjustment and senior utility relief. 1. Any gas or electric corporation operating within the state shall, in coordination with the department and the office of temporary and disability assistance, establish a medical cost-of-living adjustment program for residential customers aged sixty-five years or older who incur documented medical expenses necessary to maintain or preserve life or basic bodily function.

2. Participation in the program established pursuant to this section shall be voluntary and opt-in, and no customer shall be enrolled without affirmative consent.

3. Each gas and electric corporation shall provide written individual notice and opt-in materials to any residential customer when an individ-

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

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ual listed on the utility account, billing record, or payment documentation attains the age of sixty-five. Such notice shall inform the customer of the availability of medical cost-of-living adjustments and utility bill relief under this section and shall include clear instructions for enrollment.

4. Utilities shall re-offer participation and provide updated opt-in materials annually to all customers aged sixty-five and older who are eligible under this section, for the purpose of allowing such customers to submit new or updated medical documentation reflecting changes in health status, medical necessity, treatment duration, or life circumstances.

5. Eligible medical expenses shall include prescription medications and treatments required for the maintenance of heart, lung, brain, kidney, endocrine, neurological, or other chronic or terminal conditions as certified by a licensed medical professional.

6. Medical expenses incorporated into cost-of-living adjustment calculations under this section shall be discounted at a graduated rate beginning at fifteen percent and increasing based on documented medical necessity and duration of treatment, provided that such discount shall not exceed twenty-five percent.

7. Customers qualifying under this section shall be eligible for a corresponding gas and electric utility bill discount beginning at fifteen percent and escalating up to a maximum of twenty percent, determined by the extent to which such medical expenses are required to sustain life or preserve quality of life.

8. Discounts provided under this section shall be applied in addition to, and shall not replace or reduce, any benefits available under the Home Energy Fair Practices Act, the Energy Affordability Policy, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or any successor programs.

9. The department shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to implement this section, including but not limited to standards for medical documentation, escalation thresholds, annual notice requirements, consumer protections against service termination for medically eligible households, and methods to ensure compliance by utilities.

§ 3. The social services law is amended by adding a new section 97-a to read as follows:

§ 97-a. Medical cost-of-living adjustment and senior utility relief. Each social services district shall be required, in accordance with state and federal law, to assist eligible households found in such districts to obtain a medical cost-of-living adjust and utility relief pursuant to section sixty-six-x of the public service law. Such districts shall consider documented medical expenses in determining cost-of-living adjustments for senior assistance programs, and shall coordinate with utility corporations for the administration of medical-based utility discounts pursuant to such section sixty-six-x of the public service law. Nothing in this section shall limit eligibility for existing state or federal energy assistance programs, nor reduce benefits otherwise available to senior citizens under current law.

§ 4. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such date.