

A-Engrossed
House Bill 3459

Ordered by the House April 4
Including House Amendments dated April 4

Sponsored by Representative HARTMAN

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure.

[Prohibits energy utility from disconnecting service to residential customer for failure to pay amount owed for energy services.]

[Prohibits energy utility from seeking to collect from residential customer who spends six percent or more of household income on energy costs.]

[Requires energy utility to accept reasonable partial payment or payment plan for overdue amounts. Requires any partial payment or payment plan to be less than six percent of customer's household monthly income.]

[Permits energy utility to recover costs for overdue amounts in rates to all residential service customers.]

[Requires energy utility to provide Housing and Community Services Department with contact information for residential customers who have higher than average energy usage. Requires department to contact customers to help customers access programs and resources that may assist with reducing energy usage.]

Extends sunset for requirement that Public Utility Commission provide, through rates charged to all customers of electric companies, collection of moneys for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

Removes requirement that assistance be only for customers who lost income due to circumstances arising from disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Reduces amount to be collected per calendar year from \$10 million to \$5 million.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to energy utility residential customers; amending sections 3 and 4, chapter 536, Oregon
3 Laws 2021.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 3, chapter 536, Oregon Laws 2021, is amended to read:

6 **Sec. 3.** (1) In addition to the funds collected pursuant to [*section 2 (1) of this 2021 Act*] **ORS**
7 **757.698 (1)** and subject to the limitation set forth in [*section 2 (1)(c) of this 2021 Act*] **ORS 757.698**
8 **(1)(c)**, the Public Utility Commission shall provide for, through rates charged to all customers of
9 electric companies, as defined in ORS 757.600, collection of [*\$10*] **\$5 million** per calendar year for
10 low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

11 (2) Notwithstanding [*section 2 (1) of this 2021 Act*] **ORS 757.698 (1)**, the rates established by the
12 commission for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance may not be less than the rates
13 in effect on [*the effective date of this 2021 Act*] **January 1, 2022.**

14 (3) Notwithstanding [*section 2 (3) of this 2021 Act*] **ORS 757.698 (3)**, for purposes of the addi-
15 tional amounts collected pursuant to this section, the Housing and Community Services Department
16 shall[.].

17 [*(a) Ensure that the additional amounts collected respond to and are delivered to customers of*

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 *electric companies who have lost income due to circumstances arising from the disease caused by the*
2 *severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2); and]*

3 [(b)] design delivery of the additional amounts in alignment with existing energy assistance
4 programs but broaden income eligibility and benefit levels such that:

5 [(A)] (a) Income eligibility is expanded to households at or below 80 percent of area median in-
6 come; **and**

7 [(B) *Standard household benefit levels may be increased to account for utility arrearages directly*
8 *related to employment, income or health effects of SARS-CoV-2; and]*

9 [(C)] (b) Persons already enrolled in or receiving state-administered, low-income assistance from
10 programs determined by the department, including but not limited to through the federal Low In-
11 come Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.), are automatically eligible for
12 low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

13 **SECTION 2.** Section 4, chapter 536, Oregon Laws 2021, is amended to read:

14 **Sec. 4.** Section 3 [*of this 2021 Act*], **chapter 536, Oregon Laws 2021**, is repealed on January
15 2, [2024] **2026**.

16
