

A-Engrossed House Bill 3792

Ordered by the House April 15
Including House Amendments dated April 15

Sponsored by Representative ANDERSEN; Representative GAMBA, Senators MEEK, REYNOLDS

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. The statement includes a measure digest written in compliance with applicable readability standards.

Digest: Raises the amount to be collected to help with electric bills for low-income customers. Tells the PUC to look every two years at the amount to be collected. (Flesch Readability Score: 62.7).

[Digest: Tells the PUC to study consumer protection for ratepayers. Tells the PUC to give a report on its findings. (Flesch Readability Score: 68.0).]

[Requires the Public Utility Commission to study consumer protection for utility ratepayers. Directs the commission to submit findings to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to energy not later than September 15, 2026.]

[Sunsets on January 2, 2027.]

Increases from \$20 million to \$40 million the minimum amount to be collected from the customers of electric companies for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

Directs the Public Utility Commission to reassess every two years the community level of need for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance. Allows the commission to adjust the amount to be collected based on its findings and changes to electricity rates. Requires the commission to report to the Legislative Assembly if the commission increases the amount to be collected by more than 2.5 percent.

Increases from \$500 to \$1,000 per month per customer site the maximum amount that a customer may be required to pay for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to consumer protection for utility ratepayers; amending ORS 757.698.

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

SECTION 1. ORS 757.698 is amended to read:

757.698. (1) An electric company, as defined in ORS 757.600, or Oregon Community Power shall collect funds for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance in an amount determined by the Public Utility Commission. The commission shall:

(a) Establish the amount to be collected and rates to be charged by each electric company from its customers, including customers receiving electricity from other sources, such that the forecasted collection by all electric companies in a calendar year is at least [\$20] **\$40** million.

(b) Reassess every two years the level of community need for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance. Based on the commission's findings and changes to electricity rates during the prior two years, the commission may increase the amount to be collected and the rates to be charged by each electric company from its customers. If the commission decides to increase the amount to be collected by more than 2.5 percent, the commission shall report within 30 days from the date of the commission's decision to the Legislative Assembly. The report must include information on the commission's findings, the amount of the increase and the amount to be collected. The report may include recommendations to change the limit on the amount that may be charged per customer site under paragraph (d)

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 **of this subsection.**

2 [(b)] (c) Adjust the rates if forecasted collections or actual collections are less than [\$20] **\$40**
3 million in any calendar year but shall not otherwise adjust the rates once set, **except as otherwise**
4 **provided in paragraph (b) of this subsection.**

5 [(c)] (d) Ensure that no customer pays more than [\$500] **\$1,000** per month per customer site for
6 low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

7 (2) Funds collected by an electric company or Oregon Community Power under this section must
8 be:

9 (a) Paid into the Housing and Community Services Department Low-Income Electric Bill Pay-
10 ment Assistance Fund established by ORS 456.587 (2);

11 (b) Used by the Housing and Community Services Department solely for purposes related to
12 low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance and for the Housing and Community Services
13 Department's cost of administering this section; and

14 (c) Expended in the service area of the electric company or Oregon Community Power from
15 which the funds are collected.

16 (3) The Housing and Community Services Department shall determine the manner in which funds
17 collected under this section are allocated by the department to energy assistance program providers
18 for the purpose of providing low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance. However, the
19 department shall:

20 (a) In consultation with electric companies, investigate and may implement alternative delivery
21 models to effectively reduce service disconnections and related costs to customers and electric
22 companies; and

23 (b) Direct priority assistance to low-income customers who are in danger of having their elec-
24 tricity service disconnected.

25 (4) The department shall maintain records and provide those records upon request to an electric
26 company, Oregon Community Power and the Citizens' Utility Board established under ORS chapter
27 774 on a quarterly basis. Records maintained must include the numbers of low-income customers
28 served, the average amounts paid and the type of assistance provided. Electric companies and
29 Oregon Community Power shall, if requested, provide the department with aggregate data relating
30 to low-income customers served on a quarterly basis to support program development.

31 (5) Interest on moneys deposited in the Housing and Community Services Department Low-
32 Income Electric Bill Payment Assistance Fund established by ORS 456.587 (2) may be used to pro-
33 vide bill payment and crisis assistance to customers whose primary source of heat is not electricity.

34 (6) Notwithstanding ORS 757.310, the commission may allow an electric company or Oregon
35 Community Power to provide reduced rates or other bill payment or crisis assistance or low-income
36 program assistance to a low-income household eligible for assistance under the federal Low Income
37 Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981, as amended and in effect on July 23, 1999.