



Legislation Text

File #: CB 119659, **Version:** 2

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

AN ORDINANCE relating to emergency assistance for low-income City Light Department and Seattle Public Utilities Department customers; amending Sections 21.49.042 and 21.76.065 of the Seattle Municipal Code to expand and align eligibility and assistance guidelines for emergency assistance programs.

WHEREAS, in December 1985, the Emergency Low-Income Assistance program (ELIA) was established by

Ordinance 112637 to provide emergency, low-income assistance to certain customers of the City Light Department (SCL); and

WHEREAS, the Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) was established by Ordinance 122174 in 2006 to

provide emergency assistance to certain low-income customers of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU); and

WHEREAS, there is a need to establish consistent eligibility and assistance guidelines across the various City energy assistance programs; and

WHEREAS, Sections 21.49.042 and 21.76.065 of the Seattle Municipal Code provide for a once-per-year emergency credit of 50 percent of an eligible customer's delinquent bills up to a maximum credit amount; and

WHEREAS, when a minor child lives in an eligible customer's household, EAP allows the customer to receive the emergency credit twice per calendar year; and

WHEREAS, ELIA is only available one time per 12-month period to families with children in the household; and

WHEREAS, the assistance available through ELIA is a fixed \$200 per year and is not adjusted to reflect average rate changes in residential bills; and

WHEREAS, the assistance available through EAP is adjusted annually to reflect the average growth in bills for residential customers; and

WHEREAS, to be eligible for ELIA and EAP, total household income of all household members may not exceed 70 percent of the Washington State median income for the number of individuals living in the household; and

WHEREAS, SCL and SPU's June 2019 response to Statement of Legislative Intent 40-1-B-1 contains recommendations to expand access to emergency assistance by increasing income eligibility to 80 percent of state median income and to allow application of emergency assistance toward 100 percent of a customer's delinquent bills; and

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to expand access to emergency assistance for low-income customers and align the SCL and SPU programs; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 21.49.042 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 124836, is amended as follows:

21.49.042 Emergency low-income assistance program

A. An emergency credit of ~~((50))~~ 100 percent of a customer's delinquent bills up to a maximum credit ~~((of \$200))~~ as provided in subsection 21.49.042.C may be granted by the Department to income-eligible residential accounts, metered for a single household, ~~((which))~~ that qualify under the following criteria:

1. Total household income does not exceed ~~((70))~~ 80 percent of the Washington State ((Median Income)) median income; and
2. Have completed an Emergency Low-Income Assistance program application where income eligibility is verified; and
3. Have received a ~~((24-hour))~~ ten-day notice from the Department notifying them that payment or payment arrangements must be made to prevent disconnection; and

4. Have entered into an agreement with the Department to pay a minimum of 50 percent of the delinquent amount and balance. The emergency credit from this program may be applied to the required payment of the minimum of 50 percent of the delinquent amount.

B. A customer is eligible for the emergency credit (~~((only one time in each 12 month Period))~~) once each calendar year, or twice each calendar year if the household includes at least one minor child.

C. In 2019, the maximum credit shall be \$200. In 2020 and subsequent years, the maximum credit from 2019 shall be adjusted annually by the Department to reflect the average growth in electric bills for residential customers.

Section 2. Section 21.76.065 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 124156, is amended as follows:

21.76.065 Low income emergency assistance program ((:))

A. Qualification. Upon satisfactory proof, emergency assistance shall be issued to each household for which a member of the household is billed, by SPU, for water, wastewater, or solid waste services and:

1. Has annual income that, when combined with the annual income of all household members, does not exceed (~~((70))~~) 80 percent of the Washington State median income for the number of individuals in the household as computed annually by the state or the City; and

~~((2. Has received notice from SPU that payment or payment arrangements must be made to prevent disconnection; and~~

~~3. Has made a payment arrangement for the remainder of any unpaid balance.))~~

B. Application. Applicants shall provide the information required by the Human Services Department or SPU, on forms and in the manner determined by the Human Services Department or SPU.

C. Emergency (~~((Credit))~~) credit. Customers with SPU residential accounts, metered for a single-family residence, and determined by the Human Services Department or SPU to be eligible under (~~((SMC))~~) subsection 21.76.065.A, shall receive an emergency credit of (~~((50))~~) 100 percent of the customer's delinquent

bills up to a maximum credit defined in subsection 21.76.065.D, but may only receive such credit once each calendar year unless a minor child lives with the customer. When a minor child lives in the household, the customer may receive an emergency credit twice each calendar year.

D. Maximum ~~((Credit Defined))~~ credit defined. In 2006, the maximum credit shall be ~~((Two Hundred Dollars (\$200)))~~ \$200. In 2007 and subsequent years, the maximum amount from 2006 shall be adjusted annually by SPU to reflect the average growth in combined water, sewer, and solid waste bills for residential customers.

E. SPU may, at its discretion, require a payment plan for the unpaid balance as a condition of receiving emergency assistance under this program.

Section 3. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2019, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2019.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved by me this _____ day of _____, 2019.

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2019.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)